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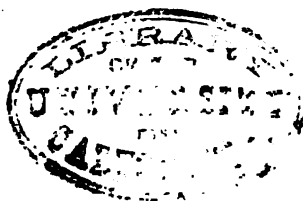
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# BRITISH PULPIT:

CONSISTING OF

DISCOURSES BY THE MOST EMINENT LIVING DIVINES,

IN

ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, AND IRELAND:

ACCOMPANIED WITH

PULPIT SKETCHES:

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

SCRIPTURAL ILLUSTRATIONS; AND SELECTIONS ON THE OFFICE, DUTIES,  
AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

BY THE

REV. W. SUDDARDS

RECTOR OF GRACE CHURCH PHILADELPHIA.

SEVENTH EDITION

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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE editor of this work has been induced to enter upon its publication at the request of several ministers and members of different denominations of Christians, who are desirous of increasing their knowledge of the productions of ministers of Jesus Christ in Great Britain. The original cost of English publications, the additional expenses of importation and duty, together with the difficulty of making a desirable selection, render the purchase of them, in many cases, altogether impracticable. To obviate this difficulty in part, at least with regard to sermons, this series of specimens of British preaching has been commenced. How far it shall prove satisfactory, time must determine.

The editor, in his selections, has not confined himself to any section of the Christian church, but has freely gone among all denominations who maintain the essential principles of the Reformation. This has been done to encourage a spirit of liberality, to induce the reader to approve and imitate every thing scriptural, holy, and excellent, wherever it may be found; and to show that while good and wise men *may* and *do* differ upon points which are minor in religion, they are still all agreed in the great leading truths of Christianity. It cannot be expected that the editor should be willing to be held responsible for every sentiment which the sermons may contain, ranging as he has done in his selections through so many denominations; at the same time, it has been, and will be his constant desire and care to keep from these pages every thing that he conceives acrimonious in spirit, offensively controversial in character, or fundamentally unsound in doctrine.

With perhaps half a dozen exceptions, all the ministers whose sermons are contained in this volume are still occupying scenes of usefulness in the vineyard of the Lord. The prophets, however, do not live for ever: within the last three or four years *Adam Clarke* has gone to his rest; *Richard Watson* has gained the prize; *Robert Hall* has left his painful toil; *William Thorpe* is numbered with his fathers; and *Joseph Hughes* has slept in death. But the cause which they lived to serve and loved to advocate still remains; and hundreds of *Elishas* are treading in the steps of these their departed *Elijahs*. May they be baptized with a double portion of their spirit.

Of the ministers whose portraits accompany this volume, it is unnecessary here to say much, as sketches of them, and many others, are given in this, or will be given in succeeding volumes. While Episcopalians feel pleasure in knowing that the amiable, pious, devoted, and laborious Daniel Wilson is a member, a minister, and a bishop of their church, similar feelings of pleasure are doubtless experienced by Presbyterians in their connexion with the talented Chalmers; by the Methodists in regard to the laborious and eloquent Newton; by Baptists towards the (late) profound and pious Hall; and by Congregationalists over the liberal and polished Raffles. Any of them would be an honour to any country, to any age, or to any Christian denomination.

The zeal of our British brethren in the cause of missions, and their mode of bringing its claims prominently and frequently before the people of their charge, is seen in many of the sermons in the present volume; and the hope is indulged that the exhibition may be encouraging to such among ourselves as are arousing themselves to this work, and cheering to those who for years have been actively devoted to it.

The emigrant from Britain may probably find on these pages sermons by men under whose ministrations he sat when in his native land. They will remind him of scenes which neither time nor distance can obliterate from his mind, and will convey to him the pleasing tidings that the doctrines of the New Testament continue to be preached in their freeness and fulness, in that land where so many of his kindred still reside.

Some of the following discourses have been taken down by the "pen of the ready writer" at the time of delivery; others of them have been published by their respective authors; but not knowing in every case which came under the former class, no distinction has been made. From the editor's acquaintance with many of the ministers of the gospel in Great Britain, and the arrangements which he has made for a supply of proper materials for such a work, he hopes to present succeeding volumes, should the sale of the present justify a continuance of the publication, with increased claims to the favourable regard of the Christian community in the United States.

To facilitate the labour of reference, two indexes will be prefixed to each volume, the first giving the name of each minister, in alphabetical order, the subject of his sermon, and a reference to the page on which it begins; the second, an arrangement of the texts, according to the order in which they are recorded in the Bible, with the preacher's name, denomination, and the page. To these will be added a table of contents, which will guide the eye of the reader to the various points treated on by the respective preachers.

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THESE stands the messenger of truth! there stands  
The legate of the skies! his theme divine,  
His office sacred, his credentials clear.  
By him the violated law speaks out  
Its thunders; and by him, in strains as sweet  
As angels use, the gospel whispers peace.

Comper.

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*The Pulpit*, whether we view it with the eye of the Legislator watching for the welfare of the state; of the Learned, jealous for public science and taste; of the Moral Philosopher, anxious for the virtue of the community; or of the devout Christian, weighing every thing in the balance of eternity;—the Pulpit must, in every light, appear an object of vast importance.—*Eclectic Review*.

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The pulpit has spoken all languages, and in all sorts of style. It has partaken of all the customs of the schools, the theatres, and the courts of all the countries where it has been erected. It has been a seat of wisdom, and a sink of nonsense. It has been filled by the best and the worst of men. It has proved in some hands a trumpet of sedition, and in others a source of peace and consolation. But on a fair balance, collected from authentic history, there would be no proportion between the benefits and the mischief which mankind have derived from it; so much do the advantages of it preponderate! In a word, evangelical preaching has been, and yet continues to be, reputed foolishness, but real wisdom, a wisdom and a power by which it pleaseth God to save the souls of men.—*R. Robinson*.

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COLLECT FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

O Lord Jesus Christ, who at thy first coming didst send thy messenger to prepare thy way before thee, grant that the ministers and stewards of thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready thy way by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that, at thy second coming to judge the world, we may be found an acceptable people in thy sight, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

THE  
BRITISH PULPIT.

SERMON I.

PREACHED ON BEHALF OF MISSIONS AT GREAT QUEEN STREET CHAPEL, LONDON.

BY THE REV. T. RAFFLES, D.D. LL.D.

*"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way."*—John xiv. 6.

"NEVER man spake like this man." Such was the testimony of persons who could not, for a moment, be suspected of partiality, and who would never have uttered this eulogy if it had not been wrested from them by an admiration, the expression of which they were utterly unable to suppress. "Never man spake like this man;" and so you would have said if you had heard him preach. Never mortal had such doctrines to deliver, and never mortal taught in so solemn and impressive, yet so tender and affectionate a manner.

The philosophers of antiquity—they only skimmed the surface of things; they talked about the loveliness of virtue and the odiousness of vice; they speculated about the immortality of the soul, and the life beyond the grave, and professed to look forward with mingled hope and fear to an hereafter concerning which none could speak with satisfaction or with certainty. And as for the scribes and pharisees, who sat in Moses's seat, they only sophisticated and polluted the purity of his morality by their adding to the cumbersome mass of rites and ceremonies, by which his dispensation was distinguished, innumerable traditions and enactments of their own. But this man—he went at once to the spring of action in the human

heart, he unfolded the foundation of moral obligation in the bonds that bind the creature to the Creator. He taught the spirituality, and purity, and perfection of the law of God. He threw a strong and steady light upon the regions of futurity, and surrounded his hearers with the dread transactions of the judgment-day, and the enduring realities of the eternal world.

"Never man spake like this man." So Nicodemus thought, when, in reply to his complimentary address, he laid down the fundamental doctrine of his gospel, and said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." So Nathaniel thought, when casting at him his mild and piercing eye, he said, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." So Zaccheus thought when he climbed up into the sycamore tree, because Jesus was to pass that way; and he turned unto him and cried, "Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." So Peter thought, when he would have reproved his Master; but the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and said, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those



that be of man." So the scribes and pharisees thought, when he took off the mask of hypocrisy by which they sought to impose upon the people, and exhibited their character in all its true, and odious, and disgusting colours, and thundered out the anathema, "Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" So Pilate thought, when in reply to his question—half, perhaps, in veneration, and half in scorn, "Art thou a king?" he answered, "Thou sayest that I am a king." Thou hast announced my true and proper dignity; I am a king; but my kingdom is not of this world. I lead no conquering armies to the battle, I press not for thrones and palaces, through fields of carnage, and seas of blood: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."

No matter where—no matter when—no matter what he said—whether in the temple, surrounded by the doctors of the law, hearing and asking them questions, or whether on the deck of the vessel, surrounded by the fishermen of Galilee; or whether in the towns, and cities, and villages of Judea, healing the sick and raising the dead; or whether at the tribunal of Pilate, the object of contempt and scorn—"never man spake like that man." There was a power, and an authority, and an influence in all he said that none could gainsay or resist. The grumbling *scribes* heard him, and they were confounded. The haughty *pharisees* heard him, and they were abashed. The frantic *demoniac* heard him, and he was still. The *diseased* heard him, and he felt impulses of health beat in all his veins. The *dead* heard him, and broke his silence and rose. "Never man spake like this man." And yet the power and authority with which he spoke was not that which thrones, and sceptres, and diadems could confer—it was not the power and authority of racks, and gibbets, and dungeons—it was not the power and authority of the princes and potentates of this world, who send their conquering armies to enforce their command, and hurl the thunders of their artillery against all who dare to resist

their mandate. No; but it was the power of light beaming upon the understanding—it was the power of truth making its way to the conscience—it was the power of God speaking to mortals by his Son. And though eighteen hundred years have rolled away since he exercised his personal ministry on earth, and uttered the language of our text, yet, by the preaching of his gospel, he speaks to you this day, and he demands that the testimony he delivers shall be received alike in the understanding and the heart; "I am the way."

But what does he mean?—The way to what?—The way to whom?—In what sense is Christ the way? My brethren, to answer these questions shall be the scope of our present discourse; and when I have put the answers in, I shall endeavour to found some pleas on them for the great cause which we are to advocate with you this morning.

This interesting declaration of the divine Redeemer occurred in the course of a conversation which he had with his disciples, in which he informed them of his approaching departure out of this world, his going to the Father, and that the world should see him no more. And he spoke as though he took it for granted that they perfectly understood his meaning, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." But Thomas—who, more than all the rest of the disciples, seems to have been remarkably under the power of unbelief—Thomas said, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" We do not understand thy meaning; explain thyself; and let us know precisely what is the drift of thy discourse. And from this the Saviour takes occasion to speak of himself more at large, as the way, the divinely appointed way, the all-sufficient way, the sole, the exclusive way of a sinner's acceptable approach to God, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Thus you have a key to unlock the meaning of the Saviour in the words of the text, and thus you perceive the drift and scope of our present discourse.

The language of the Redeemer, my

brethren, evidently implies that *man, in his natural state, is at a distance from God*. Adam, in his primeval state of innocence and purity, needed no such way as this—he needed no intercessor between God and man, no mediator, no atoning sacrifice. He approached to God immediately, and communed with him without reserve, even as a man communeth with his friend. His spirit felt no dread, his heart was agitated with no terror; he heard the voice of the Lord God in the shades of the garden, in the cool of the day, and he flew with gladness to meet him; for he recognised in its tones the voice of his best friend. Ah, how altered is the scene when guilt pressed heavy on his spirit, and shook him with dread forebodings of the wrath of an avenging God! Then a sight was seen, and then a voice was heard, such as those peaceful and holy bowers had never witnessed before—the person of man fleeing from his Maker's voice—and arrested by his Maker's call: "*Adam, where art thou?*" And he said, "*I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid.*" "Why afraid?" "I hid myself because I was naked." "Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die?"

And, my brethren, a similar consciousness of guilt, a similar dread of punishment, has pressed heavily on every human spirit, from that period to the present hour; and man, in all his tribes, and through all his generations, in one form or other, has never ceased to utter this piercing cry, "Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, or how shall I bow myself before the high God?" This is the language of the *Jew*, as he turns from his vile abominations and his inefficient sacrifices. When rivers of oil have flowed, and oceans of blood have been shed—when the cedars of Lebanon have burned, and the cattle upon a thousand hills have been immolated—still he must inquire, "Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord?" For the burden is heavy on his heart. This is the language of the *pagan*, in his severe austerities and self-inflicted

tortures, and toils, and pilgrimages, and oft-repeated prayers; as he drops the sandals from his bleeding feet, and as the lash resounds from his agonizing limbs—still he must cry, "Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, and how shall I bow myself before the high God?" This is the language of the *savage*, in his deadly incantations at the shrine of devils. This is the language of the *sage*, in all his researches after wisdom, and in all his literature and philosophy. This is the language of the *papist*, in his penances and invocations of the saints—in his confessions and fasts. This is the language of the *pharisee*, in his close adherence to the rites and ceremonies of the particular church to which he may be attached. All utter one cry, all breathe one intense anxiety, all express one ardent desire; and the desire seems intended to ascertain some principle—to devise some way by which the burden of guilt may be removed from the conscience, and man obtain pardon and peace with an offended God. But there is only *one way*, one *all-sufficient way*, one *divinely-appointed way*, and that way is announced to you in the text, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.*"

Will you allow me then, my brethren, by the induction of a few particulars, to endeavour to ILLUSTRATE THE REDEEMER'S MEANING, AND SHOW YOU IN WHAT RESPECTS CHRIST IS THE WAY.

1st. *Man being ignorant of God, Christ is the way—the only way—to an acquaintance, a sufficient acquaintance, with his character.* "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him (he caught at the language), Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" Have I yet to tell you—have you yet to learn—that the fairest, the brightest, the loveliest, the most perfect exhibition of the character of God, is in my person,

my ministry, my miracles, my doctrines, my mediatorial work. He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou, then, "Show us the Father?" In perfect harmony with this declaration of the Divine Redeemer is the language of St. Paul, when he says, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God." Where? In the face of the sun, shining in the fulness of his strength!—in the splendours of the starry firmament, in all the glories of a brilliant light!—in the pure face of nature, its vast and infinite varieties, the revolution of the sun, and the sweet interchange of day and night? No; but "in the face of Jesus Christ," "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person."

And what, I ask, has man ever discovered with accuracy, with certainty, of the character of God, apart from the revelation that Christ has made? Has he ever discovered the unity of his nature, the immateriality of his essence, the universality of his presence, the purity of his character, the rectitude of his government, the spirit of his law? No; never, *never*—he never has, he never will, he never *can*. Witness the ten thousand times ten thousand pagan deities—their gods of marble and of wood that crowd the pantheon, that swarm in the mythology of the pagan world, wrought of materials the most base, and into forms and shapes the most monstrous, the most obscene, the most absurd, that man's polluted, degraded imagination can invent. Witness those wild, those horrible, those monstrous conceptions of the Deity, that scare the imagination of the wisest and the most venerable men; and those deeds of darkness, of cruelty, and of pollution, which are perpetrated by man as a part of his acceptable worship, and as under his express and positive sanction and command. Oh, when on these missionary festivals we tell you of the sad condition of the pagan world, and write the melancholy stories of their sufferings and their crimes, you can scarcely give credit to the recital! But, you may be assured, my brethren,

that if you had never heard this teacher sent from God—if God had never spoken to you by his Son—if you had never seen the light of his glory shine in the face of Jesus Christ—and if you had never consulted these lively oracles, your conceptions of the Deity would have been as gross, and the character of your worship would have been as horrid, as that of the pagans.

2d. *Under the condemning sentence of God's violated law, Christ is the way to reconciliation and to peace, by virtue of the infinite merits of his atoning sacrifice.* You may come to God without an atoning sacrifice for sin; but, if you do, you may be crushed beneath the weight of his avenging arm, and withered by the lightning of his indignation and wrath. The beamings of the Shechinah under the law, in the most holy place, were mild and gentle emanations to the high-priest, when he approached, once a year, with the blood of the appointed sacrifice; but, if he had dared to come without blood, or with the blood of any other victim than that which was appointed for the purpose, the rash and impious mortal would have perished for his temerity, and the Shechinah would have darted on him consuming fire. Why else was the wretched Cain rejected, and given over a prey to the demons of remorse and despair? Why else did the earth open her jaws, and engulf Korah, Dathan, and Abiram? Oh, there is a justice to be satisfied—*there is a justice to be satisfied*, in the case of man, infinite in its requirements, inexorable in its demands! Every victim immolated upon the altar was only efficacious as it was offered up in faith on the great sacrifice for sin. Of such magnitude was the offence that was committed, that there was only one victim that could meet the requirements of justice—the infinite, the eternal Son of God. He was set apart, and set up from everlasting, both as the victim and as the priest. He was anointed with the holy oil; he arrayed himself in the garments of his priesthood—our degraded mortality—the vesture that was shortly to be dyed in blood. Amid the astonishment and the admiration of cherubim and seraphim, and the morning

stars of light, he left the royal mansions of the celestial world, and came down to our polluted earth—he engaged in the functions of his priesthood—he pressed forward to the high object of Mount Calvary; and there, nailed to the accursed tree, as a spectacle to angels and to men, bowed down beneath the mighty load of human guilt, he saw every type, every shadow substantiated—he saw every promise and every prophecy fulfilled—he saw every attribute of Deity harmonized and illustrated in the great scheme of human redemption he was dying to accomplish, and with the voice of God he cried, “*It is finished!*” and gave up the ghost.” And then the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom by an invisible hand, to indicate that the way of access was opened to the eternal throne, that mortals, guilty mortals, might approach and live. “*I am the way.*”

3d. *Cut off from our inheritance in heaven, by reason of our apostasy from God, we have a glorious resurrection and eternal life by Christ's resurrection from the dead.* When man rebelled, the gate of Eden was closed, and the cherubim, with a double flaming sword, was placed to guard the avenues to the tree of life, lest he should put forth his hand to eat, and live for ever. But, when Jesus died, eternal life was rolled back again, and the cherubim sheathed his double flaming sword in the Redeemer's breast. Hear him, brethren; hear him, amid the ravages of mortality; hear him, amid the dying of your kindred; hear him, amid the melancholy symptoms of your own approaching decay; hear him and rejoice: “*I am the resurrection and the life (saith the Lord); he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.*” “*This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.*”

The ashes of the saints, my brethren, are the care of Christ; his eye is on their sleeping dust; and whether they be scattered to the winds of heaven, to the re-

gions of the untrodden desert, or to the summit of the inaccessible mount—or whether they lie deeply buried amid the abyss of the ocean—or whether they slumber peaceably amid the hum, and bustle, and tumult of the crowded city—not a solitary particle essential to the identity of the bodies of all his followers shall ever be lost; but he will guard it with a sleepless care, and the trumpet of the archangel will gather together again, by the magnetic power which first created the fair system of this stupendous universe, all the myriads of atoms of which this system is composed. How he will do it is a matter that never troubles me. ‘Tis only a fool who asks the question, “*How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?*” If, my brethren, I had not seen the lovely and divine character of spring burst, as at the present season of the year, from the coldness and the torpidity of winter—if I had never seen the ripened harvest waving in the wind, and waiting for the reaper's sickle, from the grain that was committed to the earth, and which, to all human appearance, had perished beneath the clod—if I had never lifted up my eyes to the starry firmament, and contemplated suns, the centres of other systems in magnitude and beauty far surpassing ours, all sprung into being by the fiat of God's will, and preserved in perfect order by the exercise of his omnipotence—if I had never contemplated my own frame—the curious structure of my own frame, so exquisitely wrought in the deep retirements of nature—if, in short, I had any doubt as to the divinity of Christ, or the being of Christ, I should look with trembling apprehension to the day of death, and distressing anxiety to the promise-resurrection morning. But, as it is, I know that he who built this body at first, can be at no loss for power to bring it again into loveliness and glory from the desolations of the sepulchre, and fashion it like unto his own glorified body, from the wreck and ruin of the grave.

Thus, my brethren, I have endeavoured to illustrate the Redeemer's declaration in the text, and have directed the attention of this assembly to Jesus Christ as

the only way, the divinely appointed way, of a sinner's acceptable approach to God; but, ere I proceed to derive from the topic I have chosen an argument, an appeal, in behalf of the great object that now lies before us, may I be permitted—nay, in the faithful and conscientious discharge of the duty with which, as a preacher of the gospel, I am intrusted, can I do otherwise than pause, and put it to every man's conscience in this assembly, whether he has embraced the way thus consecrated for a guilty world, and, by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, secured his own individual and personal acceptance in the sight of God?

My fathers and brethren in the ministry will, I know, justify me, and approve the course I take, when I say, I will not seek to move your sympathies in behalf of perishing millions in pagan lands, till I have first pressed the inquiry home upon yourselves—on each one in this congregation, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? No matter what thy age, thy sex, thy rank, thy station, thy condition in society, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? Is the mediatorial work of Christ the exclusive ground on which you build for eternity? If it be not, you must perish; and your ruin will be the more tremendous by reason of the advantages you have enjoyed, the warnings and admonitions you have buried in oblivion, or the fair and specious profession you have made. Oh, it would have been better for you that you had never been born, or that you had been born in the rudest, wildest solitude of nature, where the name of Christ was never heard, where a Bible was never seen, where the foot of a Christian missionary never trod, where the light of a sabbath, a Christian sabbath, never dawned, than that you should hear of Christ to despise him, and to reject him, and to trample on his blood:—for how can you escape? I shall press the question, How can you escape? What mountain will cover you—what rock will crush you—what refuge will shelter you—what subterfuge will avail you? By what arguments will you triumph and prevail? “How will you escape if you neglect so great salvation?” Your

lip must be sealed, and, in the silence of despair, you must listen to your doom, and receive your sentence, “Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:” for “he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

But our deep and profound attention, my brethren, is now demanded by a world lying in wickedness; and we must address ourselves this day once more to THE GREAT ARGUMENT BY WHICH WE STRIVE TO EXCITE YOUR SYMPATHIES, YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS, AND YOUR PRAYERS, IN AID OF THE MISSIONARY CAUSE.

O how gladly would I retire from the service, the weight and the magnitude of which wellnigh overwhelms me, and listen to the more powerful pleadings of some able advocate from among the many devoted and honourable men by whom I see myself surrounded. But I am here at your bidding, I cast myself upon his aid whose cause I dare to plead; and, resting on the thousand promises adapted to an occasion like this, I spurn with boldness the dark suggestions of despondency and unbelief.

The time has gone by, my brethren, when any thing like novelty can reasonably be expected in a Missionary Sermon; and I rejoice exceedingly that it has. The *novelty* of the subject has been for ages the *scandal* of the Christian church; but that scandal has now, happily, been rolled away. Christians of every denomination have become familiar with the mighty subject. It is no longer the matter of doubtful speculation, or of the divided opinions, that it once was. The army of the living God is enrolled—it has become a living mass of the Lord's detachments—the troops have advanced far into the goodly land, and they have taken possession of many fair and promising regions in the name of our Immanuel. And we, my brethren, who stay at home and watch for the issues, have only from time to time to recount to you the victories won by their peaceful armies, to beat up for fresh recruits, and levy new contributions on your willing benevolence and zeal. It is for this that you hold your annual festivals in this great metropolis, and we

in the distant provinces of the empire, and our brethren in every village, in every hamlet throughout the country;—that as the pious Jews in ancient times strengthened the bond—the bond that was more than filial affection—to Jerusalem, by their annual visits to the temple, so we may rekindle our liberal zeal, and renew to one another the solemn pledge of devotedness to this great cause; and year after year thus at the altar of God swear that we will not forsake it while there is a single human being upon the face of the earth who has not heard and welcomed the glad tidings of salvation.

The cause in which we are engaged, my brethren, is infinitely worthy of a devotion like this, inasmuch as that every other to which men have consecrated their energies in comparison with it—I say *in comparison* with it—I care not whether it be the cause of philanthropy, or the cause of philosophy, or the cause of patriotism—but every other in comparison with it dwindles in utter insignificance, or is not worthy of serious consideration at all: for what is the body to the soul?—and what are the interests of an empire, and the passing, perishable, fleeting concerns of time, to the enduring realities of eternity?

Ponder, then, my brethren—ponder this day again the great object of missionary enterprise. Contemplate it *as an object so simple that a child may comprehend it—an object so sublime that the purest seraph that burns before the eternal throne would deem it his highest honour to be intrusted with the great commission, and would fly with the rapidity of lightning to execute it.* It is simply to preach the gospel to every creature. And what is the gospel it preaches? I say its very name is glorious; and, wherever there is a tongue to proclaim it, it must awaken emotions of the liveliest gratitude and joy. It is *news—good news—good news to man—good news to all—good news to men sunk in ignorance and sin—good news from God.* It is a proclamation of pardon from the King of kings to his rebellious subjects—from God to the human race; and the first sentence of the proclamation is, “Let the wicked forsake his

ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” The chief excellency of the gospel, my brethren, is that it is precisely adapted to the condition and the necessity of man, under all the possible circumstances of his existence upon earth. The state of the case is simply this; every creature is in a condition to need the gospel, and the gospel is adapted to the condition of every creature. Every creature is guilty; the gospel announces pardon. Every creature is ignorant; the gospel sheds the light of divine illumination upon the darkened understanding. Every creature is wretched; the gospel directs him to the true source of felicity and joy. Every creature is polluted; the gospel unfolds a fountain open for sin and uncleanness. Every creature is diseased, and dying from the dreadful malady of sin; the gospel points to the true sovereign balm—announces the balm of Gilead and the physician of souls. Hence, he who has it in commission to preach the gospel may ever be at work, and wherever he meets a human being, with that human being he has to do. He has a message with him—he has a story of redeeming love to tell him; and there is no exception at all, constituted by man’s colour, or kindred, or clime—his rank, or station, or condition in life. It addresses alike the monk and the libertine—the widow in her cottage and the peasant in his barn—the criminal at the bar and the judge upon the tribunal—the philosopher in his studies and the poet in his reveries—the beggar on the dunghill and the monarch on the throne; and he that rejects it does it at his peril; its glad tidings must be welcomed, or the man must perish.

Ponder, brethren, again, I beseech you—since how glorious is the message which I have to deliver to mankind—ponder the grounds of encouragement with which you are presented in the publication of the message to the world. They are so abundant that I scarcely know where to begin. In the first place, the preaching of the gospel is a divine institution. It is

not a human device; the language of the Saviour is most distinct and unequivocal: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." This is enough for us; we want no more than this. With this assurance we can meet the sneer of contempt, the serpent of malignity, and the loud laughter of derision. We know that the instrument is mean, and in itself altogether inadequate. We know that it is an earthly vessel, in which the heavenly treasure is contained. We wonder not that the wise and prudent of this world account it the foolishness of preaching. But if the instrument were even meaner than it is, and God still condescended to employ it, he could make it mightier than all the influence that may be exerted against it, and demonstrate, in a way the most humbling to the pride of man and degrading to human glory, that the foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God stronger than man.

Ponder again *the dignity and glory of Him in whose cause you are engaged, and by whose authority you act.* It was in immediate connexion with this great commission that the Redeemer declared, "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth." And it was not a vain boast. Witness the credentials with which he was furnished, and the many proofs he had of the divinity both of his person and of his mission. Three times was it attested by a voice from heaven: once at his baptism, when the heavens opened, and the Spirit descended like a dove and rested upon him; once at his transfiguration, when the displays of his godhead beamed so glorious through the veil of his humanity, that the disciples were enraptured, and wist not what to say; and once, when so terrible was the voice, that some said it thundered, and others that an angel spake. Do you want further proof? See him imparting the light of day to the sightless eyeball, giving tone and vigour to palsied limbs, ejecting demons from their distressed victims, stilling the furious tempests, and raising the dead; and even in the season of his deepest ignominy and extremest suffering, when he bled in agony upon the ac-

curSED tree, the heaving of the solid ground, as in the throes of an untimely birth—the darkened heavens at high noon—the rending of the rocks—the raising of the dead, proclaiming him to be the Son of God. But it was only for a season that he bowed to the empire of death, and condescended to remain a captive in the grave. He burst the bars of the tomb; it was not possible that he could be holden of them; and he rose to ascend up on high. Amid the greetings and shoutings of cherubic and seraphic attendants, and the morning stars of light and glorified spirits of the just made perfect, he entered the celestial world, and took his seat at the right hand of God, and grasping the sceptre of universal empire—his double right, by creation and by his blood—he sways it over, and is overruling continually the affairs of this inferior world, that he may establish the security of his church, accomplish her destined trophies, and set up his throne in the hearts of the millions, the countless millions, he has ransomed in his blood.

*The success, my brethren, which has already accompanied the preaching of the gospel, and the trophies which the cause of Christ has hitherto achieved, furnish another ground of confidence in connexion with the missionary enterprise.* That there are difficulties we are quite ready to acknowledge; we are by no means anxious to conceal them, as it respects their number or their magnitude. We know something of the obstinacy and perverseness of the human heart—something of its deep-rooted and bitter malignity against God—something of its decided and desperate hostility to every thing that is pure and holy; we know something of the terrific forms which this bitter enmity assumes in pagan lands; something of the inveteracy of habit; something of the power of a system, whose institutions and whose principles are wrought in the very texture and frame-work of society; and we know how hopeless would be the effort to undermine and overthrow this state of things, so firmly settled, so deeply rooted, by the mere effort of human ingenuity, of human skill, or by an arm of flesh. While, however, the

statesman and the philosopher pour contempt on our undertaking, and regard it as the extreme of fanaticism and folly, we occupy ground on which they never stood, and we have resources at our command on which they never calculated. Is any thing too hard for the Lord? "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." Only admit that the cause is God's, and that the arm of Omnipotence is guaranteed on its behalf, and all our fears are given to the winds. He may indeed, for the trial of our faith, and the exercise of our patience, in the accomplishment of his purposes, seem to delay; but though it should ever be remembered that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day; though in a manner to humble our pride, and to convince us that in this great undertaking our confidence must be reposed exclusively in him, he may suffer us sometimes to endure disappointment, yet, as to the final issue, we can no more doubt than we can doubt the return of the seasons, or the rising of the morrow's sun. Men talk about the mighty fabric of eastern superstition, and about the power of prejudices, and about the fascinations of caste, as though these things were omnipotent,—and to mere human strength they are; but mighty as is the fabric, though it be consummated and cemented by the veneration and practices of ages and generations, and though it be deeply rooted in all the natural appetites and passions of the human breast, yet, if God put his hand to the work, and employ his almighty power, "The strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark; and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them."

There is no species of opposition, my brethren, over which the gospel has not already triumphed, and over which it is not still destined to triumph. Can you conceive of difficulties more formidable than those which pressed around it in the first age of Christianity. All the rank, learning, power, influence, eloquence, wisdom, and philosophy of the world were overthrown by it, though its abettors, its supporters—the first heralds of

salvation—were the meanest and the most despised among men; fishermen, tax-gatherers, tent-makers. Against them power lifted up her arm, and authority promulgated her edicts; bigotry mustered her hosts—intolerance pointed her enmity—persecution opened her dungeons, forged her fetters, reared her gibbets, kindled her fires; and yet—at the peril of imprisonment and death, at the risk of all that men are accustomed to hold dear—these devoted servants of the cross went forth: they scattered the seed of the kingdom; they nourished the seed they scattered with their blood; it was rendered, by an influence from heaven, prolific; and, growing a very great tree, it speedily filled the earth with its foliage and the luxuriousness of its fruit.

And hear, my brethren,—hear the pledge and promises of those triumphs which the gospel is yet destined to achieve, and which it must achieve, ere the predictions of ancient times are accomplished; that the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Then, Juggernaut shall bow before the cross; then, the Shasters of the Brahmin, and the Koran of Mahomet, shall be torn in pieces, and their fragments scattered to the wind. Then, every pagan idol, every pagan altar, every Mahometan delusion, every popish superstition, shall be crushed beneath the wheels of the triumphant car. Then, the cities of Pekin and Canton shall send forth their teeming populations to bid the Saviour welcome. Myriads of voices in heaven shall respond to myriads on earth; and the anthem shall be heard like mighty thunder rolling the universe of God, "Hallelujah, hallelujah! the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!" Visions of glory! Bright anticipations of the future! Shall they ever be realized? They shall, they *must*. God hath spoken it, and he cannot lie; and to the declaration he has set the seal of an oath; and, because he can swear by no greater, he has sworn by himself, saying, "Surely every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue confess that I am God."

Must I plead, and must I plead with you this great cause? Let your coun-



nances respond. Tell me, do you need argument to convince you, and strong appeals to excite you? Are you not conscious of the miseries of millions of your species—millions sunk in all the degradation of paganism, wallowing in its pollution, and agonized by its tortures? Must I appeal to you on the principles of *common humanity*? If this be the bread of life that is to feed a starving world—if this be the sovereign balm that is to heal and to soothe the moral maladies and wounds that infect our nature—if this be the only light that can conduct man through the darkness of this world to climes of felicity and bliss beyond the grave, can you have it, and the power to impart it—and imparting it to others will by no means impoverish yourselves—I say, where is your claim to a spark of common humanity if you can withhold your hand, monopolize the precious boon, and let others perish in moral want? I appeal on the ground of *common justice*. I do not merely appeal to you on principles of benevolence, to move you by the multiplicities of their miseries, but I plead upon the ground of common justice. It is a debt you owe to the world. “I am a debtor, says the apostle, both to the Greeks and to the barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise;” and you are as much a debtor as he could be. God gave you not this book that you might monopolize it, and the gospel, that you might press it to your bosom in your self-

ishness and solitude, and thus steal to heaven alone. *No*; but he gave you this book in commission, in trust, that you might give it to others; and he sent you the gospel, that, having drank yourselves deep and refreshing draughts of the cup of life, you might hand it round to the perishing millions that are within your reach. And is there a man—nay, is there a creature that calls himself a man, for I will not designate him so—in this assembly, who will rise up and ask, “Who is my neighbour, and who is my brother?” Every man—every man, whether his skin is black or white—whether he speaks your language, or one you cannot comprehend—whether he dwells here or at the antipodes—I say, every man is your brother and your neighbour, and if you can reach him, and enlighten him, and save him, can you refuse to do it? If you do, God will plead against you—will take the injured brother’s part; for the voice of his blood will cry to heaven against you from the ground.

Go, I beseech you, and be prompt and liberal in what you do this day. Time is rolling rapidly on; men are perishing every moment in ignorance; zealous missionaries need supplies, and the wants of a perishing world need to be satisfied; and we look to your benevolence and zeal that their cry may be answered, “Come over and help us!” I cease to plead: let the collection now be made. **ARISE, O GOD, AND PLEAD THINE OWN CAUSE!**

## SERMON II.

### THE POWER OF RELIGION ON THE HUMAN INTELLECT

BY THE REV. H. MELVILL, M.A.

LATE FELLOW AND TUTOR OF ST. PETER'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, AND MINISTER OF  
CAMDEN CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL.

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*"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple."—*  
Psalms cxix. 130.

THERE is no point of view under which the Bible can be surveyed, and not commend itself to thinking minds as a wonderful book, and a precious. Travelling down to us across the waste of far-off centuries, it brings the history of times which must otherwise have been given up to conjecture and fable. Instructing us as to the creation of the magnificent universe, and defining the authorship of that rich furniture, as well material as intellectual, with which this universe is stored, it delivers our minds from those vague and unsatisfying theories which reason, unaided in her searchings, proposed with respect to the origin of all things. Opening up, moreover, a sublime and simple system of theology, it emancipates the world from degrading superstitions, which, dishonouring Deity by the representations propounded of his character, turn vice into virtue, and so banish what is praiseworthy from human society.

And thus, if you kept out of sight the more important ends subserved by the disclosures of the Bible, there would be no single gift for which men stood so indebted to the Almighty as for the revelation of himself in the pages of Scripture. The great engine of civilization is still the written word of the Most High. And if you visit a tribe of our race in the lowest depths of barbarism, and desire to bring up the debased creatures, and place them on their just level in the scale of existence, it is not by the enactments of

earthly legislation, any more than by the tyrannizings of earthly might, that you may look to bring speedily round the wished-for result. The effective machinery is Christianity, and Christianity alone. Propagate the tenets of this religion, as registered in the Bible, and a mighty regeneration will go out over the face of the long degraded community.

We need hardly appeal, in proof of this assertion, to the records of the effects of missionary enterprise. You are all aware that, in many instances, a great change has been wrought, by the labours of faithful and self-denying men, on the savage clans amongst which they have settled. We omit, for the present, the incalculable advantages consequent on the introduction of Christianity, when another state of being is brought into the account. We consider men simply with respect to their sojourning upon earth; and we contend that the revolution effected in temporal affairs should win, even from those who prize not its disclosures in regard to eternal, the warmest admiration for the Bible. There has succeeded to lawlessness and violence, the beautiful scenery of good order and peace. The rude beings, wont to wander to and fro, alternately the prey and the scourge of neighbouring tribes, have settled down to the quiet occupations of industry; and gathering themselves into villages, and plying at the businesses of handicraft or agriculture, have presented the aspect of a well-disciplined society in exchange

for that of a roving and piratical horde. And when a district which has heretofore, both morally and physically, been little better than a desert, puts forth, in all its outspread, the tokens of a vigorous culture, and the sabbath-bell summons from scattered cottages a smiling population, linked together by friendship, and happy in all the sweetnesses of domestic charities; why, the infidel must be something less than a man, if, with all his contempt for the Bible as a revelation from God, he refuse to admire and esteem it as a noble engine for uplifting humanity from its deep degradations.

But we wish rather to draw off your thoughts from what the Bible has done for society at large, and to fix them on what it effects for individuals. It follows, of course, that, since society is the aggregate of individuals, what the Bible does for the mass is mainly the sum of what it does separately for the units. An effect upon society presupposes an effect on its component members in their individual capacities; it being impossible that the whole should be changed except by the change of its parts.

Now we are persuaded, that there is no book, by the perusal of which the mind is so much strengthened, and so much enlarged, as it is by the perusal of the Bible. We deal not yet with the case of the man who, being under the teachings of God's Spirit, has the truths of revelation opened up to him in their gigantic and overwhelming force. We shall come afterwards to the consideration of the circumstances of the converted; we confine ourselves, for the present, to those of the unconverted. We require nothing but an admission of the truth of Scripture; so that he who reads its declarations, and statements, receives them as he would those of a writer of acknowledged veracity. And what we contend is, that the study of the Bible, even when supposed without influence on the soul, is calculated, far more than any other study, to enlarge the mind, and strengthen the intellect. There is nothing so likely to elevate, and endow with new vigour, our faculties, as the bringing them into contact with stupendous truths, and the

setting them to grasp and measure those truths. If the human mind grow dwarfish and enfeebled, it is, ordinarily, because left to deal with common-place facts, and never summoned to the effort of taking the span and altitude of broad and lofty disclosures. The understanding will gradually bring itself down to the dimensions of the matters with which alone it is familiarized, till, having long been habituated to contracting its powers, it shall lose, wellnigh, the ability of expanding them.

But if it be for the enlargement of the mind, and the strengthening of its faculties, that acquaintance should be made with ponderous and far-spreading truths, it must be clear that knowledge of the Bible outdoes all other knowledge in bringing round such result. We deny not that great effects may be wrought on the peasantry of a land by that wondrous diffusion of general information which is now going forward through the instrumentality of the press. It is not possible that our penny magazines should be carrying to the workshop of the artisan, and the cottage of the labourer, an actual library of varied intelligence, without producing a universal outstretch of mind, whether for good, or whether for evil. But if a population could be made a Bible reading population, we argue that it would be made a far more thinking, and a far more intelligent population, than it will ever become through the turning its attention on simplified sciences, and abbreviated histories. If I desired to enlarge a man's mind, I should like to fasten it on the truth that God never had beginning, and never shall have end. I would set it to the receiving this truth, and to the grappling with it. I know that, in endeavouring to comprehend this truth, the mind will be quickly mastered, and that, in attempting to push on to its boundary lines, it will fall down, wearied with travel, and see infinity still stretching beyond it. But the effort will have been a grand mental discipline. And he who has looked at this discovery of God, as made to us by the word of inspiration, is likely to have come away from the contemplation with his faculties elevated, and,

at the same time, humbled; so that a vigour, allied in no degree with arrogance, will have been generated by the study of a Bible truth; and the man, whilst strengthening his mind by a mighty exercise, will have learned the hardest, and the most useful, of all lessons, that intellect is not omnipotent, but that the greatest wisdom may be, oftentimes, the knowing ourselves ignorant.

We are not, you will observe, referring to the Bible as containing the food of the soul, and as teaching man what he must learn if he would not perish everlastingly. We are simply arguing that the bringing men to study the Bible would be the going a vast deal further towards making them strong-minded, and intellectual, than the dispersing amongst them treatises on all the subjects which philosophy embraces. The Bible, whilst the only book for the soul, is the best book for the intellect. The sublimity of the topics of which it treats; the dignified simplicity of its manner of handling them; the nobleness of the mysteries which it develops; the illumination which it throws on points the most interesting to creatures conscious of immortality; all these conspire to bring round a result which we insist upon as actual and necessary, namely, that the man who should study the Bible, and not be benefited by it spiritually, would be benefited by it intellectually. We think that it may be reckoned amongst incredible things, that converse should be held with the first parents of our race; that man should stand on this creation whilst its beauty was un sullied, and then mark the retinue of destruction careering with a dominant step over its surface; that he should be admitted into intercourse with patriarchs and prophets, and move through scenes peopled with the majesties of the Eternal, and behold the Godhead himself coming down into humanity, and working out, in the mysterious coalition, the discomfiture of the powers of darkness—oh, we reckon it, we say, amongst incredible things, that all this should be permitted to a man—as it is permitted to every student of Scripture—and yet that he should not come back from the ennobling associa-

tions with a mind a hundred-fold more expanded, and a hundred-fold more elevated, than if he had given his time to the exploits of Caesar, or poured forth his attention on the results of machinery.

We speak not thus in any disparagement of the present unparalleled efforts to make knowledge accessible to all classes of our community. We are far enough from underrating such efforts; and we hold, unreservedly, that a vast and a beneficial effect may be wrought amongst the poor through the well-applied agency of vigorous instruction. In the mind of many a peasant, whose every moment is bestowed on wringing from the soil a scanty subsistence, there slumber powers which, had they been evolved by early discipline, would have elevated their possessor to the first rank of philosophers; and many a mechanic, who goes patiently the round of unvaried toil, is, unconsciously, the owner of faculties which, nursed and expanded by education, would have enabled him to electrify senates, and to win that pre-eminence which men award to the majesty of genius. There arise occasions when, peculiar circumstances aiding the development, the pent-up talent struggles loose from the trammels of pauperism; and the peasant and mechanic, through a sudden outbreak of mind, start forward to the places for which their intellect fits them. But, ordinarily, the powers remain through life bound up and torpid; and he, therefore, forms but a contracted estimate of the amount of high mental endowment, who reckons by the proud marbles which cause the aisles of a cathedral to breathe the memory of departed greatness, and never thinks, when walking the village church-yard with its rude memorials of the fathers of the valley, that, possibly, there sleeps beneath his feet one who, if early taught, might have trod with a Newton's step the firmament, or swept with a Milton's hand the harpstrings. We make then every admission of the power which there is in cultivation to enlarge and unfold the human understanding. We nothing question that mental capacities are equally distributed amongst different classes of society; and that, if it

were not for the adventitious circumstances of birth, entailing the advantages of education, there would be sent out from the lower grades the same proportion as from the higher, of individuals distinguished by all the energies of talent.

And thus believing that efforts to disseminate knowledge may cause a general calling forth of the mental powers of our population, we have no other feeling but that of pleasure in the survey of these efforts. It is indeed possible—and of this we have our fears—that, by sending a throng of publications to the fireside of the cottager, you may draw him away from the Bible, which has heretofore been specially the poor man's book, and thus inflict upon him, as we think, an intellectual injury, full as well as a moral. But, in the argument now in hand, we only uphold the superiority of scriptural knowledge, as compared with any other, when the alone object proposed is that of developing and improving the thinking powers of mankind. And we reckon that a fine triumph might be won for Christianity, by the taking two illiterate individuals, and subjecting them to two different processes of mental discipline. Let the one be made familiar with what is styled general information; let the other be confined to what we call Bible information. And when, in each case, the process has gone on a fair portion of time, and you come to inquire whose reasoning faculties have been most improved, whose mind has most grown and expanded itself, we are persuaded that the scriptural study will vastly carry it over the miscellaneous, and that the experiment will satisfactorily demonstrate, that no knowledge tells so much on the intellect of mankind as that which is furnished by the records of inspiration.

And if the grounds of this persuasion be demanded, we think them so self-evident as scarcely to require the being formally advanced. We say again, that if you keep out of sight the concern which man has in scriptural truths, regarding him as born for eternity, there is a grandeur about these truths, and a splendour, and a beauty, which must amaze and

fascinate him, if he look not beyond the present area of existence. In all the wide range of sciences, what science is there comparable, in its sublimity and difficulty, to the science of God? In all the annals of humankind, what history is there so curious, and so riveting, as that of the infancy of man, the cradling, so to speak, of the earth's population? Where will you find a lawgiver from whose edicts may be learned a nobler jurisprudence than is exhibited by the statute book of Moses? Whence will you gather such vivid illustrations of the power of truth as are furnished by the march of Christianity, when apostles stood alone, and a whole world was against them? And if there be no book which treats of a loftier science, and none which contains a more interesting history, and none which more thoroughly discloses the principles of right and the prowess of truth; why then, just so far as mental improvement can be proved dependent on acquaintance with scientific matters, or historical, or legal, or ethical, the Bible, beyond all other books, must be counted the grand engine for achieving that improvement; and we claim for the Holy Scriptures the illustrious distinction, that, containing whatsoever is needful for saving the soul, they present also whatsoever is best calculated for strengthening the intellect.

Now we have not carried on our argument to its utmost limit, though we have, perhaps, advanced enough for the illustration of our text. We might occupy your attention with the language, as we have done with the matter, of Holy Writ. It were easy to show you that there is no human composition, presenting, in any thing of the same degree, the majesty of oratory, and the loveliness of poetry. So that if the debate were simply on the best means of improving the taste of an individual, others might commend to his attention the classic page, or bring forward the standard works of a nation's literature; but we, for our part, would chain him down to the study of Scripture; and we would tell him, that, if he would learn what is noble verse, he must hearken to Isaiah sweeping the chords to Jerusalem's glory; and if he would know

what is powerful eloquence, he must stand by St. Paul pleading in bonds at Agrippa's tribunal.

It suits not our purpose to push further this inquiry. But we think it right to impress on you most earnestly the wonderful fact, that, if all the books in the wide world were assembled together, the Bible would as much take the lead in disciplining the understanding, as in directing the soul. Living, as we do, in days when intellectual and scriptural are set down, practically, as opposite terms, and it seems admitted as an axiom that to civilize and to christianize, to make men intelligent, and to make men religious, are things which have no necessary nor even possible connexion, it is well that we sometimes revert to the matter of fact; and whilst every stripling is boasting that a great enlargement of mind is coming on a nation, through the pouring into all its dwellings a tide of general information, it is right to uphold the forgotten position, that, in caring for man as an immortal being, God cared for him as an intellectual, and that, if the Bible were but read by our artisans and our peasantry, we should be surrounded by a far more enlightened, and intelligent, population than will appear on this land, when the schoolmaster, with his countless magazines, shall have gone through it in its length and in its breadth.

But up to this point we have made no direct reference to those words of David which we brought forward as the subject of the present discourse. Yet all our remarks have tended to their illustration. The Psalmist, addressing himself to his God, declares, "the entrance of thy words giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple." Now you will at once perceive that, when taken in its largest signification, this verse ascribes to the Bible precisely that energy for which we have contended. The assertion is, that the entrance of God's word gives light, and that it gives also understanding to the simple; just as it has been our endeavour to show that a mind, dark through want of instruction, or weak through its powers being either naturally poor, or long unexercised, would become either

illuminated, or strengthened, through acquaintance with the contents of Scripture. We thus vindicate the truth of our text, when religion, properly and strictly so called, is not brought into the account. We prove that the study of the Bible, when it does not terminate in the conversion of the soul, will terminate in the clearing and improvement of the intellect. So that you cannot find the sense wherein it does not hold good, that "the entrance of God's words giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple."

But we now go on to observe that the passage applies with a vastly greater force to the converted than to the unconverted. We will employ the remainder of our time in examining its truth when the student of Scripture is supposed also the subject of grace. It would seem as though this case were specially contemplated by the Psalmist, there being something in the phraseology which loses otherwise much of its point. The expression "the entrance of thy words," appears to denote more than the simple perusal. The light breaks out, and the understanding is communicated, not through the mere reading of thy words, but through the "entrance of thy words;" the Bible being effective, only as its truths pierce, and go deeper than the surface. And although it must be readily conceded that the mere reading, apart from the entrance of the word, can effect none of those results which we have already ascribed to the Bible, we still think the chief reference must be to an entrance into the soul, which is peculiar, rather than to that into the understanding, which is common. We may also remark that the marginal reading of the passage is, "the opening of thy words giveth light." If we adopt this translation, which is, probably, the more accurate of the two, we must conclude that the Psalmist speaks of the word as interpreted by God's Spirit, and not merely as perused by the student. It is not the word, the bare letter, which gives the light, and the understanding, specially intended; but the word, as opened, or applied by the Spirit. Now, in treating the text in this its more limited signification, we have to

do, first of all, with a fact; and secondly, with the reasons of that fact. The fact is, that, on conversion, there is given to man an increased measure of understanding. The reasons of this fact are to be looked for in another fact, namely, that conversion results from the entrance, or opening, of God's words. It will be for our profit that we consider attentively both the fact and the reasons. And, first of all, as to the fact that, on becoming a man of godliness, the simple becomes increasingly a man of understanding.

Now it is, we believe, commonly observed by those who set themselves to examine the effects of religion upon different characters, that a general strengthening of the mind is amongst the usual accompaniments of piety. The instances, indeed, are of no rare occurrence in which a mental weakness, bordering almost on imbecility, has been succeeded by no inconsiderable soundness and strength of understanding. The case has come within our own knowledge of an individual who, before conversion, was accounted to say the least, of very limited capacities, but who, after conversion, displayed such power of comprehending difficult truths, and such facility in stating them to others, that men of staunch and well informed minds sought intercourse as a privilege. Something of the same kind has frequently been observed in regard to children. The grace of God has fallen, like the warm sun of the east, on their mental faculties, and, ripening them into the richness of the summer, whilst the body had as yet not passed through its spring time, has caused that grey hairs might be instructed by the tender disciple, and brought a neighbourhood round a death-bed to learn wisdom from the lips of a youth. And, without confining ourselves to instances which may be reckoned peculiar and extraordinary, we would assert that, in all cases, a marked change passes over the human mind, when the heart is renewed by the influences of God's Spirit. We are not guilty of the absurdity of maintaining that there are supernaturally communicated any of those stores of information, which are ordinarily gained by a patient and pains-taking application.

A man will not become more of an astronomer than he was before, nor more of a chemist, nor more of a linguist. He will have no greater stock of knowledge than he before possessed of subjects which most occupy the learned of his fellows. And if he would inform himself in such subjects, the man of religion must give himself to the same labour as the man of no religion, and sit down, with the same industry to the treatise and the grammar. The peasant, who becomes not the philosopher simply because his mental powers have been undisciplined, will not leave the plough for the orrery, because his understanding is expanded by religion. Education might give, whilst religion will not give, the powers the philosophical bent. But there is a wide difference between the strengthening the mind, and the storing it with information.

We may plead for the former effect without at all supposing the latter; though we shall come afterwards to see that information of the loftiest description is conveyed through the opening of the Bible, and that, consequently, if the impartment of knowledge be an improving thing to the faculties, an improvement, the most marked, must result from conversion. But we confine ourselves, at present, to the statement of a fact. We assert that, in all cases, a man is intellectually, as well as spiritually, advantaged through becoming a man of piety. He will have a clearer and less biased judgment. His views will be wider, his estimates more correct. His understanding, having been exercised on truths the most stupendous, will be more competent for the examination of what is difficult or obscure. His reason, having learned that much lies beyond her province, as well as much within, will give herself to inquiries with greater humility and greater caution, and therefore, almost to a moral certainty, with greater success.

And though we may thus seem rather to account for the fact than to prove it, let it be remembered that this fact, being an effect, can only be established, either by pointing out causes, or by appealing to experience. The appeal to experience is, perhaps, the correcter mode of the two

And we, therefore, content ourselves with saying, that those who have watched character most narrowly will bear out the statement, that the opening of God's word is followed, ordinarily, by a surprising opening of man's faculties. If you take the rude and illiterate labourer, you will find that regeneration proves to him a sort of intellectual, as well as a moral renovation. There shall generally be no ploughman in the village who is so sound, and shrewd, and clear-headed a man, as the one who is most attentive to the salvation of his soul. And if an individual have heretofore been obtuse and unintelligent, let him be converted, and there shall hereafter be commonly a quickness and animation; so that religion, whose prime business it is to shed light upon the heart, shall appear, at the same time, to have thrown fire into the eye. We do not, indeed, assert that genius and talent are imparted at the new birth. But that it is amongst the characteristics of godliness, that it elevates man in the scale of intellectual being, that it makes him a more thinking, and a more inquiring, and a more discriminating creature, that it both rectifies and strengthens the mental vision; we are guilty of no exaggeration, if we contend for this as universally true; and this, if not more than this, is asserted in the statement, that "the entrance of God's words giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple."

But we are now, in the second place, to consider certain of the reasons of this fact. What is there in the entrance, or, more strictly, in the opening, of God's words, which may fairly account for so singular a result? We begin by reminding you that the entrance, or opening of God's word, denotes the application of scriptural truth to the heart and conscience by that Almighty agent, the Holy Ghost. Hence a saving, influential, belief in the disclosures of revelation is the distinguishing property of the individuals referred to in our text. And in inquiring, therefore, how it comes to pass that understanding is given to the simple, we are to proceed on the supposition that he is endowed with real faith in those mighty

truths which inspired writers were commissioned to make known. Thus the question before us is reduced to this—what connexion subsists between believing in the heart the words of God, and having the understanding enlightened and strengthened?

Now our great difficulty is not in finding an answer to this question, but in arranging and condensing our material of reply. We would, first of all, remind you that the truths, which have been commended to the belief, are the most sublime and spirit-stirring of all that can engage the attention of mankind. They are the truths of eternity, and their dimensions correspond with their duration. And we feel that there must be an amazing demand upon the mind, when, after long years of confinement to the petty affairs of this perishing state, it is summoned to the survey of those unmeasured wonders which crowd the platform of the future. I take a man whose attention has been engrossed by commerce, and whose thoughts have been given wholly to the schemings and workings of trade. May we not affirm that, when the grace of God takes possession of this man's soul, there will occur an extraordinary mental revolution, and that, too, brought round by the magnificence of the subjects with which his spirit has newly grown conversant? In place of oceans which can be fathomed, and weighed, and measured, there is an expanse before him without a shore. In place of carrying on intercourse with none but the beings of his own race, separated from him by a few leagues of distance, he sends his vessels, as it were, to lands tenanted by the creatures of a more glorious intelligence, and they return to him freighted with a produce costlier, and brighter, than earthly merchandise. In place of acquaintance with no ledger, save the one in which he casts up the debtor and creditor of a few fellow-worms, there arises before him the vast volume of doomsday, and his gazings are often on the final balance sheet of the human population. And we simply demand whether you think it possible, that there should be this overpowering accession to



the objects which occupy the mind, and yet that the mind itself should not grow, and enlarge, and strengthen? The mind which deals with both worlds cannot, in the nature of things, be so contracted as that which deals only with one. Can that be a large understanding which is conversant with nothing but the scenery of a finite existence; or, rather, if heretofore the understanding have grasped nothing but the facts of an hour and a league, and these have appeared to crowd it to the full, must there not have taken place a scarcely measurable enlargement if eternity and infinity now be gathered within its spreadings? Besides, there will be a sounder and correcter judgment upon events and probabilities, when reference is always made to the first cause, than when regard is had only to second causes. There will be a fairer and more honest deliberation, when the passions are under the sway of divine promises and threatenings, than when there is no higher restraint than the ill-defined ones of human honour. So that it would seem altogether to be expected that, on the mere account of the might and vastness of the truths, into acquaintance with which the mind is introduced, the mind itself will send forth latent and unsuspected powers, or even shoot up into a new stature which shall put to shame its former dwarfishness. Thus the opening of God's words is accompanied, or followed, by the rousing up of dormant energies. The sphere, which the sand-grain seemed to fill, is required to dilate, and take in immensity. The arm which plucked a leaf, or lifted a pebble, must strive to wrench up the oak, and raise the mountain. And in striving it strengthens. The mind, employed on what is great, becomes itself greater; busied with what is bright, it becomes itself brighter. Let the man, therefore, have been even of weak mental capacity—conversion will give something of nerve and tone to that capacity. Besides, it is a thing worthy your remark, and so obvious as scarcely to be overlooked, that all love, except the love of God, reduces and contracts the soul. If a man be a covetous man, fastening the might of his affections upon

money, you will ordinarily find him, in every respect, a narrow-minded being. His intellect, whatever its natural capacities, will embrace little or nothing beyond modes of accumulation, and will grow practically unable to overpass the circles of profit and loss. It is just the same if a man's love be fixed on reputation. We hold it impossible there should be enlarged views, when those views centre in one's self. There may be lofty and far-spreading schemes; for ambition can look upon a world, and think it too small for its marchings. But so long as those schemes are schemes for the aggrandizement of self, they may take a creation for their sphere, and yet require to be described as pitiful and niggardly. It is no mark of an ample mind that it can be filled with an unit. And many a philanthropist, labouring quietly, and unobtrusively, for the well-being of a solitary parish, or neighbourhood, has thereby proved himself a larger hearted, and a larger souled, creature than an Alexander, boundless in his graspings; and that, too, upon the clear and straight-forward principle, that a heart which holds only one's-self, is a narrower and more circumscribed thing than another which contains a multitude of our fellows. The truth is that all objects of love, except God, are smaller than the heart itself. They can only fill the heart, through the heart being contracted and narrowed. The human soul was framed, in its first creation, to that wideness as to be capable of enjoying God, though not of fully comprehending Him. And it still retains so much of its glorious original, that "all other things gather it in and straiten it from its natural size." Whereas the love of God not only occupies it to the full, but, inasmuch as in its broadest enlargement it is still infinitely too narrow for God, this love, as it were, doth stretch and expand it, enabling it to hold more, and giving it, at the same time, more to hold. Thus, since the converted man loves God, and this new object of love demands amplitude of dwelling, we contend that, as a consequence on conversion, there will be extension of the whole mental apparatus. And if you find the man hereafter, as we

are bold to say you will find him, exercising a correcter judgment, and displaying a shrewder sense, than had before time seemed in his possession, you have only to advance, in explanation of the phenomenon, that "the entrance of God's words giveth understanding to the simple."

But we may state yet more strongly, and also multiply our reasons why, on becoming religious, the simple man should become more a man of understanding. Let it just be considered that man, whilst left in his state of aatural corruption, is a being, in every respect, disorganized. Under no point of view is he the creature that he was, as fashioned, originally, after the image of his Maker. He can no longer act out any of the great ends of his creation; a total disability of loving and obeying the Almighty having been fastened on him, by his fore-father's apostasy. And when this degraded and ruined being is subjected to the saving operations of the Spirit of God, he is said to be renewed, or remodelled, after the long lost resemblance. The conscience becomes disquieted; and this is conviction. The heart and its affections are given back to God; and this is conversion. Now we do not say, that, by this great moral renovation, the injuries which the fall caused to the human intellect are necessarily repaired. Nevertheless, we shall assert that the moral improvement is just calculated to bring about an intellectual. You all know how intimately mind and body are associated. One plays wonderfully on the other, so that disease of body may often be traced to gloom of mind, and, conversely, gloom of mind be proved to originate in disease of body. And if there be this close connexion between mental and corporeal, shall we suppose there is none between mental and moral? On the contrary, it is clear that the association, as before hinted, is of the strictest. What an influence do the passions exercise upon the judgment! How is the voice of reason drowned in the cry of impetuous desires! To what absurdities will the understanding give assent, when the will has resolved to take as their advocacy! How little way

can truth make with the intellect; when there is something in its character which opposes the inclination! And what do we infer from these undeniable facts? Simply, that whilst the moral functions are disordered, so likewise must be the mental. Simply, that so long as the heart is depraved and disturbed, the mind, in a certain degree, must itself be out of joint. And if you would give the mind fair play, there must be applied straightways, a corrective process to the heart. You cannot tell what a man's understanding is, so long as he continues "dead in trespasses and sins." There is a mountain upon it. It is tyrannized over by lusts and passions, and affections and appetites. It is compelled to form wrong estimates, and to arrive at wrong conclusions. It is not allowed to receive as truth what the carnal nature has an interest in rejecting as falsehood. And what hope, then, is there that the intellect will show itself what it actually is? It may be gigantic, when it seems only puny; respectable, when it passes for despicable. And thus we bring you back again to the argument in hand. We prove to you that a weak mind may be so connected with a wicked heart, that to act on the wickedness would be going far towards acting on the weakness. Oh, fatal downfall of man's first parent—the image could not be shivered in its moral features, and remain untouched in its intellectual. Well has it been said that possibly "Athens was but the rudiments of Paradise, and an Aristotle only the rubbish of Adam." But if there be a moral renovation, there will, from the connexion now traced, be also, to a certain extent, an intellectual. And hence, since at the entrance of God's words the man is renewed in holiness, we have a right to expect that he will also be renewed in understanding. If additional mental capacity be not given, what he before possessed is allowed to develop itself; and this is practically the same as though there were a fresh gift. If he receive not actually a greater measure of understanding, still, inasmuch as the stern embargo which the heart laid on the intellect is mercifully removed, he is, virtually,

under the same circumstances as if a new portion were bestowed. Thus, with all the precision which can fairly be required in the interpretation of such a phrase, we prove that, since man is elevated in the scale of intelligence through being raised from his moral degradation, we are bound to conclude with the Psalmist, that "the entrance of God's words giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple."

We have yet one more reason to advance, explanatory of the connexion which we set ourselves to trace. You observe that the entrance, or the opening, of God's words denotes such an application to the soul of the truths of revelation that they become influential on the life and conversation. Now, why should a man who lives by the Bible be, practically, possessed of a stronger and clearer understanding than, apparently, belonged to him ere this rule was adopted? The answer may be found in the facts, that it is a believer's duty, whosoever he lacks wisdom, to ask it of God, and a believer's privilege never to be sent empty away. In all those cases which require the exercise of a sound discretion, which present opposite difficulties, rendering decision on a course painfully perplexing, who is likely to display the soundest judgment? the man who acts for himself, or another who seeks, and obtains, direction from above? We plead not for rash and unfounded expectations of a divine interference on our behalf. We simply hold fast to the promises of Scripture. And we pronounce it to be beyond all peradventure, that, if the Bible be true, it is also true that they who have been translated from darkness to light are never left without the aids of God's Spirit, unless they seek not those aids, or seek them not earnestly and faithfully. If I have known the entrance, or the opening, of the word of our God, then I have practically learned such lessons as these: "lean not to thine own understanding;" "in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." And if I am not to lean to mine own understanding, and if I have the privilege of being directed by a higher than mine

own, it is evident that I occupy, practically, the position of one to whom has been given an increased measure of understanding; and what, consequently, is to prevent the simple man, whose rule of life is God's word, from acting in all circumstances, whether ordinary or extraordinary, with such prudence, and discretion, and judgment, that he shall make good, to the very letter, the assertion, that "the entrance of God's words giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple!"

Now it is not possible to gather into a single discourse the varied reasons which might be given for the fact under review. But the causes already adduced will serve, at least, to show that the fact is by no means unaccountable; but that, on the contrary, the connexion is so necessary between spiritual improvement and intellectual, that amongst the accompaniments of a renewed heart we may justly reckon a clearer head.

We desire, in conclusion, to press upon you once more the worth of the Bible, and then to wind up our subject with a word of exhortation.

Of all the boons which God has bestowed on this apostate and orphaned creation, we are bound to say that the Bible is the noblest and most precious. We bring not into comparison with this illustrious donation the glorious sunlight, nor the rich sustenance which is poured forth from the storehouses of the earth, nor that existence itself which allows us, though dust, to soar into companionship with angels. The Bible is the developement of man's immortality, the guide which informs him how he may move off triumphantly from a contracted and temporary scene, and grasp destinies of unbounded splendour, eternity his lifetime and infinity his home. It is the record which tells us that this rebellious section of God's unlimited empire is not excluded from our Maker's compassions; but that the creatures who move upon its surface, though they have basely sepulchred in sinfulness and corruption the magnificence of their nature, are yet so dear in their ruin to Him who first formed them, that he hath bowed

down the heavens in order to open their graves. Oh! you have only to think what a change would pass on the aspect of our race, if the Bible were suddenly withdrawn, and all remembrance of it swept away, and you arrive at some faint notion of the worth of the volume. Take from christendom the Bible, and you have taken the moral chart by which alone its population can be guided. Ignorant of the nature of God, and only guessing at their own immortality, the tens of thousands would be as mariners, tossed on a wide ocean, without a pole-star, and without a compass. The blue lights of the storm-fiend would burn ever in the shrouds; and when the tornado of death rushed across the waters, there would be heard nothing but the shriek of the terrified, and the groan of the despairing. It were to mantle the earth with a more than Egyptian darkness; it were to dry up the fountains of human happiness; it were to take the tides from our waters, and leave them stagnant, and the stars from our heavens, and leave them in sackcloth, and the verdure from our valleys, and leave them in barrenness; it were to make the present all recklessness, and the future all hopelessness, the maniac's revelry and then the fiend's imprisonment, if you could annihilate that precious volume which tells us of God and of Christ, and unveils immortality, and instructs in duty, and woos to glory. Such is the Bible. Prize ye it, and study it more and more. Prize it, as ye are immortal beings—for it guides to the new Jerusalem. Prize it, as ye are intellectual beings—for it "giveth understanding to the simple."

We have now only space for a brief word of exhortation, and we ask for it your closest attention. A minister, if he would be faithful to his calling, must mark the signs of the times, and endeavour so to shape his addresses that they may meet, and expose the prominent errors. Now we think that, in our own day, there is a strong disposition to put aside the Bible, and to seek out other agency in accomplishing results which God hath appointed it to effect. We

fear, for example, that the intellectual benefits of scriptural knowledge are well-nigh entirely overlooked; and that, in the efforts to raise the standard of mind, there is little or no recognition of the mighty principle that the Bible outweighs ten thousand Encyclopædias. And we are fearful on your account, lest something of this national substitution of human literature for divine should gain footing in your households. We fear lest, in the business of education, you should separate broadly that teaching which has to do with the salvation of the soul from that which has to do with the improvement of the mind. We refer to this point, because we think ourselves bound, by the vows of our calling, to take every opportunity of stating the duties which devolve on you as parents or guardians. There is a sense in which it may be affirmed that souls, those mysterious and imperishable things, are given into the custody of every father of a family. And we are persuaded that if there be one thing on this earth which, more than another, draws the sorrowing regards of the world of spirits, it must be the system of education pursued by the generality of parents. The entering a room gracefully is a vast deal more attended to than the entering into heaven; and you would conclude that the grand thing for which God had sent the child into the world was that it might catch the Italian accent, and be quite at home in every note of the gamut. Christianity, indeed, is not at variance with the elegancies of life: she can use them as her handmaids, and give them a beauty of which, out of her service, they are utterly destitute. We wage no war, therefore, with accomplishments, any more than with the solid acquirements of a liberal education. We are only anxious to press on you the necessity that ye make religion the basis of your system. We admit, in all its breadth, the truth of the saying, that knowledge is power. It is power—ay, a fatal power, and a perilous. Neither the might of armies, nor the scheming of politicians, avails any thing against this power. The schoolmaster, as we

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have already hinted, is the grand engine for revolutionizing a world. Let knowledge be generally diffused, and the fear of God be kept in the back ground, and you have done the same for a country as if you had laid the gunpowder under its very institution; there needs only the igniting of a match, and the land shall be strewn with the fragments of all that is glorious and venerable. But, nevertheless, we would not have knowledge chained up in the college and monastery, because its arm is endowed with such sinew and nerve. We would not put forth a finger to uphold a system which we believed based on the ignorance of a population. We only desire to see knowledge of God advance as the vanguard of the host of information. We are sure that an intellectual must be a mighty peasantry. But we are equally sure that an intellectual, and a godless, will demonstrate their might, by the ease with which they crush whatever most adorns and elevates a kingdom. And in speaking to you individually of your duties as parents, we would bring into the family circle the principles thus announced as applicable to the national. We want not to set bounds to the amount of knowledge which you strive to impart. But never let this remembrance be swept from your minds, that, to give a child knowledge without endeavouring, at the same time, to add to knowledge godliness, is to do your best to throw the momentum of the giant into the arm of the idiot; to construct a machinery which may help to move a world, and to leave out the spring which would insure its moving it only towards God. We would have you shun, even as you would the tampering with an immortality deposited in your keeping, the imitating what goes on in a thousand of the households of a professedly Christian neighbourhood,—the children can pronounce well, and they can step well, and they can play well; the mother proudly exhibits the specimens of proficiency in painting, and the father dwells, with an air of delight, on the progress made in Virgil and Homer—but if you inquire how far these parents are providing for

their own in the things of eternity, why, the children have perhaps learned the Church Catechism, and they read a chapter occasionally on a Sunday afternoon. And that ye may avoid the mistake into which, as we think, the temper of the times is but too likely to lead you, we would have you learn, from the subject which has now been discussed, that, in educating your children for the next life, you best educate them for the present. We give it you, as a truth, made known to us by God, and, at the same time, demonstrable by reason, that, in going through the courses of Bible instruction, there is better mental discipline, whether for a child or an adult, than in any of the cleverly devised methods for opening and strengthening the faculties. We say not that the study of Scripture should exclude other studies, or be substituted for them. Natural philosophy is not to be learned from Scripture, nor general history; and we would not have such matters neglected. But we say that scriptural study should be, at once, the groundwork and companion of every other; and that the mind will advance, with the firmest and most dominant step, into the various departments of knowledge, when familiarized with the truths of revelation, and accustomed to walk their unlimited spreadings. If parents had no higher ambition than to make their children intellectual, they would act most shrewdly by acting as though desirous to make their children religious. It is thus we apply our subject to those amongst you who are parents or guardians. But it applies to all. We call upon you all to observe that, in place of being beneath the notice of the intellectual, the Bible is the great nourisher of intellect. We require of you to bear away to your homes, as an undeniable fact, that to care for the soul is to cultivate the mind. We will not yield the culture of the understanding to earthly husbandmen. There are heavenly ministers who water it with a choicer dew, and pour on it the beams of a more brilliant sun, and prune its branches with a kinder and more skilful hand. We will not give up reason to stand always as a

priestess at the altars of human philosophy. She hath a more majestic temple to tread, and more beauteous robes wherein to walk, and incense rarer and more fragrant to burn in golden censers. She does well when exploring boldly God's visible works. She does better, when she meekly submits to spiritual teaching, and sits, as a child, at the Saviour's feet; for then shall she experience the truth, that "the entrance of God's words giveth light and understanding." And, therefore, be ye heedful—the young amongst you more especially—that ye be not ashamed of piety as though it argued a feeble capacity. Rather be assured, forasmuch as revelation is the great strengthener of reason, that the march of mind which leaves the Bible in the rear, is an advance, like that of our first parents in Paradise, towards knowledge, but, at the same time, towards death.

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ROUSSEAU AND LORD BYRON.

BY DR. CHALMERS.

Thus far have we explained the doctrine of original sin; a doctrine which affirms that there is an original proneness to sin in all men, in virtue of which it is that all men are sinners. This principle is feebly felt, and therefore feebly recognised by many eloquent expounders; who would tolerate impiety, if there were force enough in their own powerful and pathetic appeals, to school away selfishness, and cruelty, and fraud; and who undertake to tutor the species, apart from what they nauseate as Methodism. We have seen how bitterly they have been disappointed; and how they have poured out this disappointment on their disciples. Rousseau was one of these writers. He may be said to have abjured Christianity; but from the bower of sensibility and romance, he sent forth those appeals, which were to recall a wandering race to primitive innocence. He plied all Europe with the spells of a most passionate and fascinating eloquence; and there were not

wanting those who worshipped him as an idol while he lived; and after his death made a pilgrimage to his tomb. They thought he had sown the seeds of a great moral revolution; but even Rousseau himself lived long enough to mourn over the failure of his own schemes; and in his retirement was he heard to curse the humanity he had so idolized. It is striking to remark how, ere he closed his career, he became sick of a world he had vainly attempted to reform; and renouncing the brotherhood of his species, loudly proclaimed that the race was incurably tainted with disease!

What Rousseau was in prose, Lord Byron was in poetry. Not that he attempted to *reform* a world, of which he seldom speaks but in the deep derision of a heart which despaired of it;—not on account of its ungodliness; for it is not that which calls forth the bitterness of his adjurations. But he saw that "the whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint;" that the deadly virus had totally pervaded it; and he gave back to the world, from his own breast, a reflected image of the guilt which troubled and deformed it. We should have liked to see him led to the source of this moral disease; for though hid under a veil of apparent mysticism, it would seem as if, in his wild and frenzied career, his imagination caught a glimpse of that, which he never thoroughly understood.

"Our life is a false nature; 'tis not in  
The harmony of things; this hard decree,  
This unradicable taint of sin,  
This boundless upas, this all-blasting tree  
Whose root is earth; whose leaves and  
branches be  
The skies, which rain their plagues on men  
like dew;—  
Disease, death, bondage; all the woes we  
see,  
And worse, the woes we see not; which thrill  
through  
Th' immediacable soul, with heart-aches eve  
new."

CHILDE HAROLD.

## SERMON III.

### IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

BY THE REV. T. CHALMERS, D.D.

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*"He hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."*

—2 Tim. i. 10.

THE men of this earth carry on their designs and their doings just as if on earth they were to live for ever. Each is so intent upon his own earthly objects; every heart is so occupied with its own earthly schemes; every countenance speaks such deep and over anxiety after some favourite yet earthly ambition; each individual is so decidedly embarked, with all his powers of attention and perseverance, in some earthly undertaking, that surely one would think that can be naught of a trifling or temporary nature which either creates or keeps up so mighty a stir among our species. And yet it is not the less true that all the busy activities of all these people have their upshot in forgetfulness. It is not the greatness or the durability of the object which has called forth the effort and the strenuousness of men; it is the folly of men that urges them to the pursuit of paltry and evanescent objects—a folly which overlooks the arithmetic of our little years, and has invested them with the characters of eternity—a folly which all the demonstrations of experience have been unable to rectify, and which, after the mighty sweep of countless generations from the face of our world, reigns with unquelled strength over the human heart, and finds the men of the present day as unwise and as infatuated as ever. Death is a theme of mighty import, and every variety of eloquence has been exhausted on the magnitude of its desolations. There is not a place where human beings congregate to-

gether that does not, in the fleeting history of its inmates, give the lesson of their mortality. Is it a house? Death enters unceremoniously there, and, with rude hand, tears asunder the dearest of our sympathies. Is it a town? Every year death breaks up its families, and the society of our early days is fast melting away from us. Is it a market place? Though at the end of twenty years I see a crowd as busy and as numerous as before, these are new faces which meet me, and new names which fall upon the ear. Is it a church? The aspect of the congregation is changing perpetually; and in a little time another people will enter these walls, and another minister will speak to them. Is it the country at large? On every side we see a shifting population; another set of occupiers to the farms; and other names are annexed to the properties.

But this is viewing the subject at a distance. Every assemblage of objects is composed of individuals. And think of the numbers that must have suffered to accomplish the change which I have now set before you. Think that each of these individuals carried in his bosom a living principle, and that principle is now to all appearance extinguished—that each felt as warmly and as alive to the world as perhaps any who now hears me, and that this world the stern necessity of death forced them to abandon for ever—that each was as feelingly open to pain and fear, and that the forebodings, and the

reluctance, and the agonies of death came upon all of them—that each had hopes, and plans, and wishes to accomplish, but that death forced them away, and they are all buried in forgetfulness along with them. “All is vanity, saith the preacher;” and it is death which stamps this character on the affairs of the world—it throws a mockery upon all that is human—it frustrates the wisest plans, and absolutely converts them into nothingness. All the ecstasies of pleasure, all the splendours of fame, all the triumphs of ambition, all the joys of domestic tenderness, all that the eye can look upon, or the heart aspire after, *this, this* is their affecting termination—death absorbs all, it annihilates all. Our fathers who strutted their little hour on this very theatre, were as active and noisy as we—the loud laugh of festivity was heard in their dwellings; and in the busy occupations of their callings, they had their days of labour and their nights of painful anxiety; the world carried on it the same face of activity as now—and where are the men who kept it up in their successive generations? They are where we shall soon follow them; they have gone to sleep—but it is the sleep of death—their bed is a coffin in which they are mouldering—the garment which they have thrown aside is their body, which served them through life, but is now lying in loose and scattered fragments in the little earth that they claim.

And it does aggravate our hopelessness of escape from death, when we look to the wide extent and universality of its ravages. We see no exception—it scatters its desolations with unsparring regularity among all the sons and daughters of Adam. It perhaps adds to our despair when we see it extending to the lower animals, or behold the lovely forms of the vegetable creation dissolving into nothing. It carries to our observation all the immutability of a general law; we can look for no mitigation of the incorrigible distemper; we cannot reverse the process of nature, nor bid her mighty elements to retire. Is there no power, then, superior to nature, and which can control it? To us a law of the universe carries the idea

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of some fixed and unalterable necessity along with it, and of none more strict, more unfailing, and more widely extensive in its operation than the law of death. In the wide circuit of things does there exist no high authority that can abolish this law?—no power that can overthrow death, that can grapple with this mighty conqueror and break his tyranny to pieces? We never saw that being, but the records of past ages have come down to us, and we there read of the extraordinary visitor who lighted on these realms where death had reigned so long in all the triumphs of extended empire. Wonderful enterprise! He came to destroy death. Vast undertaking! He came to depose nature from this conceived immutability; and a law which embraced within its wide grasp all who live and move on the face of the world, he came to overturn; and he soon gave token of a power commensurate to the mighty undertaking. That nature, to whose operations we are so apt to ascribe some stubborn and invincible necessity, gave way at his coming; she felt his authority through all her elements, and she obeyed it. Wonderful period!—when the constancy of nature was broken in upon by him who established it—when the Deity vindicated his honour, and the miracles of a single age, committed to authentic history, gave evidence to all futurity that there is a power above nature and beyond it. What more, unchanging than the aspect of the starry heavens—and in what quarter of her dominions does nature maintain a more silent and solemn inflexibility, than in the orbs which roll around us? Yet, at the coming of that mighty Saviour, these heavens broke silence—music was heard from their canopy, and it came from a congregation of living voices, which sung the praises of God, and made them fall in articulate language on human ears. After this, who can call nature unalterable? Jesus Christ hath abolished death, he has made perpetual invasion upon nature's constancy, and she never in a single instance resisted the word of his power. “What manner of man is this?” said his disciples, “even the winds and the sea obey him!” Philosophers love to expa-

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tings, and they tell us of the laws of the animal and the vegetable kingdom. These laws may prove an impassable barrier to us, but in the hand of the omnipotent Saviour they were nothing—he reversed or supported them at pleasure; he blasted the fig tree by a single word; and what to us was the basis of high anticipation, he made man the subject of his miracles. He restored sight to the blind, he restored speech to the dumb, he restored motion to the palsied, and to crown his triumph over nature and her processes, he restored life to the dead,—he laid down his own life, and took it up again. The disciples gave up all for lost when they saw the champion of their hopes made the victim of the very mortality which he promised to destroy. It was like the contest and victory of nature—but it was only to make his triumph the more complete. He entered—

“That undiscover’d country from whose bourn  
No traveller e’er returns”——

But he did. He broke asunder the mighty barriers of the grave; he entered and he reanimated that body which expired on the cross, and by that most striking of all testimonies he has given us to know that he hath fought against the law of death, and hath carried it.

But man not only wants *power* to achieve his own immortality, he also wants *light* to discover it. That such, in spite of every appalling exhibition to the contrary, is really to be the ultimate state of man, is not brought to light by reason. The text indeed says as much, in saying that “it is brought to light by the gospel.” It represents the great truth as groped by nature, and only made clear by revelation; it seems to cast discredit on all the arguments of science, in behalf of a future state; and just for want of a sufficient basis in the evidence of philosophy, on which to rear this noble anticipation, it would rest and establish it wholly on the evidence of faith.

In the further prosecution of this discourse, let me

I. *Advert to what may be called the physical state; and*

II. *To the moral state of the mind; and*

*under this head let me endeavour to contrast the insufficiency of the light of nature with the sufficiency and fullness of the light of the gospel.*

First, Then, in regard to the *physical* state of the mind. An argument for its immortality has been drawn from the consideration of what we should term the physics of the mind, i. e. from the consideration of its properties when it is regarded as having a separate or substantive being of its own. For example—it has been said the spirit is not matter, and therefore must be imperishable. We confess that we see not the force of this reasoning. We are not sure of the premises, and neither do we apprehend how the conclusion flows from them. We think ourselves familiar with the subtleties and scholastics that have been uttered upon this subject—they are to us far from satisfactory; nor are we persuaded of it by evidence on which we rest our belief in any coming event, or coming state, of the futurity that lies before us. We cannot have the force of practical evidence on those abstract and metaphysical generalities which are employed to demonstrate the endurance, or rather the indestructibility, of the thinking principle, so as to be persuaded that it shall indeed survive the dissolution of the body, and shall separately maintain its consciousness and powers on the other side of the grave. Now, in the recorded fact of our Saviour’s resurrection, we see what we might call a more popular, as well as a more substantial and convincing argument, for the soul’s immortality, than any thing furnished by the speculations we have now referred to. To us the one appears as much superior to the other as history is more solid than hypothesis, or as experience is of a texture more firm than imagination, or as the philosophy of our modern Bacon is of a surer and juster character than the philosophy of the old schoolmen. Now, it is on the fact of his own resurrection that Christ rests the hope and the promise of resurrection to all of us. “If he be not risen from the dead,” saith one of the apostles, “we are of all men the most miserable.” It is to this fact that he appeals for the foundation

and the hope of immortality. To every cavil and to every difficulty he opposes this as a sufficient argument—that *Christ has risen*. This was Paul's argument, and it has descended by inheritance to us. We have received the testimony—we have access to the documents—we can take a view of the unexampled evidence which has been carried down to us in the vehicles of history; and in opposition to all which fancy or speculation can muster against us, we can appeal to the fact. It is not a doctrine excogitated by the ingenuities of human reasoning—it is a doctrine submitted to the observation of the human senses. It is not an untried experiment; while Jesus Christ lived on our earth he made it repeatedly, and with uniform success, upon others; and in giving up his body to the cross he made it upon himself. One who could carry an experiment such as this to a successful termination, has a claim to be listened to; and he tells us, by the mouth of an apostle, that the fact of himself having risen bears most decidedly upon the doctrine that we shall rise also; "for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so they who sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him."

Let it be remembered, before we conclude this head of discourse, that the word which is rendered "*abolished*," signifies also "*made of none effect*." "He hath abolished death, or made death of none effect." The latter interpretation of the word is certainly more applicable to our *first* or *temporal* death. He has not *abolished* temporal death; it still reigns with unmitigated violence, and sweeps off each successive generation with as great sureness and rapidity as ever. This part of the sentence is not abolished, but it is rendered ineffectual. Death still lays us in the grave, but it cannot chain us there to everlasting forgetfulness; it puts its cold hand on every one of us, but a power higher than death will lift it off, and these forms be again reanimated with all the warmth of life and of sentiment. The churchyard has been called the land of silence—and silent it is indeed to them who occupy it—the Sabbath-bell is no longer heard, nor yet the tread of the

living population above them; but though remote from the hearing of every earthly sound, yet shall the sound of the last trumpet enter the loneliness of their dwelling, and be heard through death's remotest caverns. When we open the sepulchres of the men of other times, the fragments, the skeletons, and the mouldering of bones, form indeed a humiliating spectacle; but the working of the same power which raised Jesus from the dead shall raise corruption to a glorious form, and invest it in all the blush and vigour of immortality. "So is the resurrection of the dead; it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory."

There is much need that we be habitually reminded of these things, for in truth we live in almost constant forgetfulness of them. The region of sense and the region of spirituality are so unlike the one to the other, that there is positively nothing in our experience of the former which can at all familiarize our minds to the conception of the latter. And then, as if to obstruct the flight of our imaginations onward to eternity, there is such a dark and cloudy interment that hangs upon the very entrance of it; ere we can realize that distant world of souls, we must press our way beyond the curtain of the grave—we must scale the awful barricado which separates the visible from the invisible—we must make our escape from all the close, and warm, and besetting urgencies, which in the land of human beings are ever plying us with constant and powerful solicitations, and force our spirits across the boundaries of sense to that mysterious scene where cold, and meagre, and evanescent spirits dwell together in some unknown and incomprehensible mode of existence.

We know not if there be any other tribe of beings in the universe who have such a task to perform. Angels have no death to undergo—there is no such affair of unnatural violence between them and their final destiny—it is for *man*, and for aught that appears, it is for man *alone* to fetch, from the other side of a material panorama that hems and encloses him, the great and abiding realities with which he has everlastingly to do—it is for him, so locked in an imprisonment of clay, and with no other available medium than the eye and the ear, it is for him to light up in his bosom a lively and realizing sense of the things which “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard”—it is for man, and perhaps for man alone, to travel in thought over the ruins of a mighty desolation, and looking to the wreck of the present world by which he is encompassed, to conceive that future world in which he is to expatiate for ever. But harder achievement perhaps than any, it is for man in the exercise of faith, to bear that most appalling of all contemplations, the decay and the dissolution of himself—to think of the time when his now animated framework, every part of which is so sensitive and so dear to him, shall fall to pieces—when the vital warmth by which at present it is so thoroughly pervaded, shall take its final departure, and leave to coldness and abandonment all that is visible and lovely of the present structure—when these limbs with which he now steps so firmly, and that countenance out of which he now looks so gracefully, and that tongue with which he now speaks so eloquently, and that whole body, for the interests and preservation of which he now labours so assiduously, as if it were indeed immortal—when all these shall be reduced to one mass of putrefaction, and shall crumble, like the coffin which encloses him, into dust.

Why, my friends, to beings constituted as we are, there is something so foreign and unnatural in death, that we are not to wonder if it scare away the mind from those scenes of existence to which it is the stepping-stone. Angels are not so circumstanced—there is no screen of darkness like this interposed between them

and any portion of their futurity, however distant; and it appears only of man, that it is for him to drive a breach across that barrier which looks so impregnable; and so to surmount the power of vision as to carry his aspirings over the summit of all that vision has made known to him.

Before I proceed to our next argument for the immortality of the soul, let me only remark, as a strong practical proof of the necessity of something higher and more influential than the mere power of reasoning upon the subject, *how strongly wedded we are to the things of sense and of time, in spite of every demonstration, however affecting, that is given of their vanity.* It is wonderful, it is passing wonderful, that we should abide in such an abstract state of insensibility, and that in the face of all experience, and, I may add, of all arithmetic. For the *average* of human life is numerically known; and should there be an overweening confidence to carry our hopes beyond this average, the *maximum* of human life is numerically known; and to balance the uncertainty whether our days on earth may not greatly *exceed* the average, there is an equal uncertainty whether they may not greatly fall short of it. There is no point from its origin downwards at which death may not lay his arrest on the current of human existence; and, as if the whole domain of society were his own, does he go forth at large from one extreme to the other of it; nor is there a single portion of the territory on which, with free and unfaltering footstep, he may not enter. In the churchyard we see graves of every dimension. This land of silence is far more densely peopled by young than by old—proving that through all departments of life, whether of age, or of youth, or of infancy, the arrows of this mighty destroyer flee at random. Parents have oftener to weep over their children's tomb, than children have to carry their parents to that place where lies the mouldering heap of the generations that have already gone by. So that we have the clearest light both of arithmetic and experience on the subject; and one would think it superfluous to hold any parley with the understanding on a topic on which the proof is so over-

powering. Why, it may be thought, should we be so anxious for urging a truth which may safely be left to its own evidence, or take occasion strenuously and repeatedly to affirm what none is able to deny? And this is just the marvellous anomaly of our nature which it is so difficult to explain. In the face of all this evidence, and in utter opposition to the judgment extracted thereby, there is an obstinate practical delusion that resides most constantly within the heart, and rules most imperiously over the judgments of the vast majority of our species. It is not that we are incapable of all influence from futurity—for it is the future gain of the present adventure, or the future issue of the present arrangement, or the future result of the present contrivance, that sets almost the whole of human activity a going. But it is the future *death*, and the future condition on the other side of it, to which we are so strangely insensible. We are all in the glow, and the bustle, and eagerness of most intense expectation, about the events that lie in the intermediate distance between us and death, and as blind to the certainty of the death itself, as if this distance stretched indefinitely onward in the region of anticipation before us, or as if it were indeed an eternity. There is a deep sleep into which our world has been lulled, as if by all the powers of fascination, from which it should seem impossible to awaken us.

Nor do we now expect of any utterance of the brevity of time that it will awaken you. For this purpose there must be the putting forth of a force that is supernatural; and the most experimental demonstration that we know of this necessity, is the torpor of the human soul about death, and the temerity wherewith it stands its ground amidst pathetic and plain exhibitions of it. We are never more assured of man, that he is wholly sold over to the captivity of this world, than in witnessing the strong adherence of his heart to it under the most touching experience of its vanity—than in perceiving how unemptied he is of all his earthiness, whether he goes from business to burials, or back again from burials to business—than in observing how, after having buried his

neighbour in the dust, he remains buried, as it were, in the concerns of the world, and will betake himself again with an eagerness as intense and unbroken to its concerns and companies as before. We affirm that, of the spell which binds him to earth, no power within the compass of nature is able to disenchant him; that argument will not; that instances of mortality in his own dwelling will not; that sermons will not; and the evident approach of the last messenger to his own person will not: and it is indeed a most affecting spectacle to behold, with the warnings and the symbols of a dissolution which so speedily awaits him, that he just hugs more closely to his heart when on the eve of being taken away from his treasures for ever. Give me then a man who is actually alive to the realities of faith; and the inference from all is, that another power than that of the influence of nature over the feelings of nature must have been put forth to awaken him. There is not, within the compass of all that is visible, any cause competent to the production of such an effect on the human spirit. The power which awakens him to a sense of spiritual things cometh from a spiritual Creator. There is naught in the world that is present, which can bring a human soul under the dominion of the world that is to come. And although one would have thought that the follies and fluctuations of time would have been sufficient to wean men from a portion so evanescent and unsatisfying, and to point them to the things of eternity, yet it would appear not; the loss and desolation which attach to the life of sense, and the certainty of all it can command being speedily and totally swept away, these will not of themselves germinate within the man the life of faith. This wondrous phenomenon of our nature convinces me of the doctrine of regeneration—that there is no power short of this which can spiritualize us—that ere our affections can be set on things that are above, an influence from above must descend upon us—and that before we become alive to the delights and glories of the upper sanctuary, there must come down from that sanctuary the light and the power of a special revelation.

A far more satisfactory argument than that which is founded upon the reasonings of philosophy, for this doctrine is to be found in the fact of the resurrection of Christ. To satisfy yourselves upon rational grounds as to the immortality of the soul, we would say, study the historical evidence for the truth of this fact. The *physical* argument of *nature* for the doctrine is grounded on certain obscure reasonings about the properties and indestructibility of the mind; the *physical* argument of *Christianity* again is grounded on the truth, the historically established truth, that Christ has actually risen; on the credit of this specimen, and with all the authority that is given by a miracle so stupendous, rests the doctrine of the general resurrection. The *moral* argument again of *nature* for the soul's immortality is furnished by the sense which is in all spirits of God's justice, and of his yet unsettled controversy with sin. In the *moral* argument of *Christianity* again the doctrine is revealed in connexion with the doctrine of the atonement; it rises every day in strength and in assurance in the experience of the believer, who feels in himself what nature never feels—a growing meekness of spirit and character, which forms at once the preparation and the earnest of the inheritance which awaits him. In order to get at the *physical* argument of *Christianity*, you have to study the historical evidence for the truth of *Christianity*, considered as a religion of facts. In point of fact, however, this rational conviction will do very little in the way of bringing you under the power of things unseen and things eternal. I believe we are never effectually brought under this power but by the study of the *moral* argument; and this moral argument can only be drawn from the *internal* evidence of *Christianity* in opposition to the *external* evidence. The moral argument never can be appreciated adequately, but by those on whom the internal evidence of *Christianity* has produced its right impressions. But before we proceed to consider strictly this argument, let us attend to how it really stands in the theology of nature—for natural theology also lays claim to moral argu-

ments. These have been drawn by philosophers from the moral state of the mind, and more especially from the progressive expansion which they affirm to belong to it. Still we fear that, in respect of this argument, there is no experience to support it. There is a beauty we do confess in many of their representations. But beauty is only for them that sit at ease. It is a cruel mockery for the man who is stretched on the bed of death, and has in his view the dark ocean of annihilation and despair. Yea, we have heard them talk, and talk eloquently too, of the high and triumphant progression of the good man—of his virtues and of his prospects—and of his death being a gentle transition to a better world—of its being the goal where he reaps the honourable reward that is due to his character—as being little more than a step that leads him to a blessed immortality. Ay, this is all very fine, but it is the fineness of poetry. Where is the evidence that it is real? We see it not. Why so cruel an interruption to the progress!—why cross this awful and mysterious death!—why is the good man not suffered to carry on in his triumphant progress!—and why comes this dark and unintelligible event to be interposed between him and the full accomplishment of his destiny? You may choose to call it a step, but there is no virtue in a name to quell our suspicions—it bears in every circumstance all the marks of a termination. We see their fortitude giving way to the power of disease—we see them withering into feebleness, and, instead of what has been called the dignity of man, we see the weakness and the fretfulness of age—we see the body bending to the dust—we see it extended in all the agony of helplessness and pain, and yet we must call this a triumphant procession to eternity! We observe the emission of the last breath, but whether the spirit is extinct, or has fled to another region, nature tells us not. We call upon the philosopher to reveal the mystery of death—we ask why the good man has such an ordeal to undergo?—why, like the angels, does he not flourish in perpetual vigour!—and how shall we explain that universal allotment, with

all its affecting accompaniments of remorse, and agony, and despair! Death, my friends, gives the lie to all such speculations of all such moralists; but it only gives evidence and consistency to the statements of the gospel. The doctrines of the New Testament will bear to be confronted with the lessons of experience. They attempt no relaxment, and no palliation—they announce the truth in all its severity; nor do they attempt to strew flowers around the sepulchre, or throw a deceitful perfume into the rottenness of the grave. Were a physician to take up my case, and speak lightly of my ailment, while I knew that a consuming disease was lurking and making progress within me, I should have no confidence in him or in his remedies. I should like him to see the malady in its full extent, that the medicine applied may be such as to meet and to combat with it. Now, Christ, the physician of souls, has taken up our disease in all its magnitude. There is no covering or concealment thrown over it. Their account of death accords with our experience of it. What they tell us of death is just what we feel it to be. Not that thing of triumph, to those void of Christianity and beyond the circle of its influence, that nature says, but a thing of distress, and horror, and unnatural violence. He who is weak enough to be carried away by the false and flimsy representations of sentimentalism, must be led to believe that each man who dies is only sinking gradually to repose, or winging his way to an ethereal world. But the Bible talks to us of the sting, and pangs, and terrors of death; and what we feel of the shrinking of nature, proves that it has experience upon its side. And those passages are particularly deserving our attention in which death is spoken of in its moral and spiritual bearings. Death, as it appears to the eye of the senses, is but the extinction of the life that we now live in the world; but that death which is revealed to us in the gospel is the effect and consequence of sin—sin is the root of the mischief, and it is a mischief which Scripture represents as stretching in magnitude and duration far beyond the ken of the senses. Had we no other ken than

the senses, we should conceive death to be utter annihilation. But distinct from the death of the *body*, there is what may be called the death of the *soul*—not a death which consists in the extinction of its consciousness, for the consciousness of guilt will keep by it for ever—not a death which implies the cessation of feeling, for that feeling will continue to the last, though the feeling of intensest suffering—not a death by which all sense of God will be expunged, for the sense of God's offended countenance will prey upon it and agonize it through all eternity. He who undergoes this second—this spiritual death does not thereby cease to have life, but he ceases to have the favour of God, which is better than life—he lives, it is true, but it is the life of an exile from hope and from happiness—he lives, but it is in a state of hopeless distance from the fountain of living waters. God is at enmity towards him, and in his own heart there is enmity towards God. This, at least, is the death of all enjoyment; it is the death of every thing which belongs to a right moral state of existence. In this sense verily the soul is dead, though alive, most perfectly alive, to the corruptions of the worm that never dies;—in this sense there has been a quenching of its life, though all awake to the scorchings of that fire which is never quenched. Temporal death in such a case is only the portal to sorer calamities. All who sin shall die—but this is not the conclusion of the sentence—but all who die in sin shall live in torment. Now it promises well for our Saviour's treatment of this sore malady, that he hath, as it were placed himself at the source of the mischief, and then made head against it. He hath combated the radical force and virulence of the disease—he hath probed it to the bottom, and has grappled with sin in its origin and in its principle—he hath taken it away; for, by the sacrifice of himself upon the accursed tree, he has expiated its guilt, and by the operation of the Spirit in the heart of the believer he is rooting out its existence. Had he only put together the fragments of my body, and recalled the soul to its former tenement he should have done nothing—

sin, both in its power and condemnation, would have claimed me as its own, and in appalling banishment from God it should have stepped in with an immortality, but an immortality of despair. But the author of the gospel has swept off the whole tribe of combatants, and has made a decisive charge at the very heart and principle of the disease.

To estimate aright the new moral existence into which Christ ushers every sinner who receives him, we have only to reflect for a moment on that state of distance and alienation from which He emancipates him. Formerly the man was either immersed in deepest oblivion and unconcern, in reference to that Being who made all and who upholds all, or, if his conscience be at all awake to a true sense of the holiness of the law, he must view the lawgiver with feelings of dread, and discouragement, and jealousy. There is a wide field of alienation between him and his Maker, and the fearful apprehensions of God's displeasure towards him engender in him back again additional dislike towards God. There is no community of affection or fondness between them; and pierced as he is by a conviction of guilt which he cannot escape from, he imagines a scowl on the aspect of the Divinity—an awful barrier of separation by which he is hopelessly and irrecoverably exiled from the sacred presence of the Eternal. His Spirit is not at ease—he is glad to find relief, in the day-dreams of a busy world, from those solemn realities, the thought of which so often disquiets him; it seeks an opiate in the things of sense and of time, against the disturbance which it finds in the things of eternity; and so cradled is he in this profoundest lethargy, that while alive unto the world, he is dead unto God.

We cannot imagine a greater revolution in the heart than that which is produced upon this distrust or apathy being done away. When, instead of viewing God with fear, or shrinking from the thought of him, the sinner can calmly gaze on his reconciled countenance, and be assured of the complacency and good will that are graven thereupon. Now, a simple faith in the glad tidings of the gospel is com-

petent to awaken this. It loosens the spirit's bondage by transforming the aspect of the divinity from the face of an enemy to that of a friend—it changes the sinner's hatred into love; and this affection, from the central, the commanding place, which it occupies, subordinates the whole man, and so utterly changes his moral system, as to make a new creature of him. The faith of the gospel is something more than the formation of a new habit—it is the germ of a new heart, and so of a new character. The believer's sensibilities are now awakened to objects to which before he was morally dead. In other words, he now becomes alive to other objects, he expatiates on a new theatre of contemplation, and he rejoices in other scenes and in other prospects than before; he has lost his relish for what he formerly delighted in, and he now delights in what he formerly had no delight; if he is not ushered into life for the first time, he is at least ushered into a new state of things—he undergoes preferment from the animal to the spiritual life; and this life, with the immortality for which it is a preparation, is not only made clear by the gospel, but faith in the gospel may be said to have created it.

Now all this is the doing of the Saviour. He has fully exposed the disease, and he has brought to it a radical cure. I cannot trust the physician who dwells upon the surface of my disease, and throws over it the disguise of false colouring. I have more confidence to put in him, who, like Christ, the physician of my soul, has looked the malady fairly in the face—has taken it up in all its extent and in all its soreness—has resolved it into its original principles—has probed it to the very bottom, and has set himself forward to combat with the radical elements of the disease. This is what our Saviour has done with death—he hath bereaved it of its sting—he has taken a full survey of the corruption, and met it in every one quarter where its malignity appeared. It was sin which caused the disease, and he hath extricated it—he hath put it away—he hath expiated the sentence—and the believer, rejoicing in the sense that all is clear with God, serves him without fear, in righteousness and

'holiness, all the days of his life. The sentence is no longer against us; we behold the Saviour, and the sentence upon himself—"he bore our iniquities in his own body on the tree"—"he who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The sentence is no longer in force against us, as the Saviour has cancelled it. He has done more than this—he has not only cancelled the guilt of sin, he has destroyed its power—he reigns in the heart of the believer—he sweeps it of all its corruptions—he takes it up as it is—he makes it such as it should be—he brings the whole man under a thorough process of sanctification, so that while he lives, he adds one Christian grace unto another—when he dies, he rejoices in hope of the coming glory—when he stands at the bar of judgment, he is presented holy and unblamable in the sight of God and his Saviour. In the whole of his treatment, I see the skill, and intelligence, and superior conduct of a physician, who is up to the disease, and knows where the force of its malignity lies—who has a thorough insight into the properties of the mischief, and has reached forth an adequate remedy to counteract it—who to abolish death, has directed the strength of his attack against *sin*, which is its origin—who has averted the condemnation of sin, by an expiatory sacrifice—and who has destroyed its power and influence by the operations of that mighty Spirit, whereby he can break down the corruptions of the human heart, and subdue it unto himself.

This is no matter of mere idle declamation; there is many a minister of Christ who could give you experience for it. He can take you to the house of mourning, to the chamber of the dying man. He can draw aside the curtain which covers the last hours of the good man's existence, and show you how a good man can die. He can ask you to bend your ear, and catch the last faltering accents of praise and piety. What meaneth that joy in the midst of suffering—that hope in the midst of approaching dissolution—that elevation in the midst of cruellest agonies? It is not his own merit that

sustains him, it is the merit of the exalted Saviour. It is not a sense of his own righteousness that gives peace to his conscience, it is the righteousness of Christ; it is a hope of being found in him, and a sense of the forgiveness which he has received through his hand. In a word, it is Christ who resolves the mystery; it is his presence that pours tranquillity and joy among such scenes of distress; it is he who dispenses fortitude to the dying man; and while despair sits on every countenance, and relations are weeping around him, he enables him to leave them all with this exulting testimony, "O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!"

While we hold out this triumphant prospect to those who entertain the overtures of reconciliation, we would urge all, even those who have not yet been visited with a spirit of concern and inquiry, to bestow one single thought on the great practical importance of the subject. The very sound of such words as *life* and *death*, *judgment* and *immortality*, should reduce you to sacredness—should set you to the work of serious reflection on this subject. We have the vantage ground of your own experience on which to stand while we endeavour thus to urge you. For your experience at least tells you thus much—that the time that is past, when you look back to it, appears as if it were nothing; and you may believe from this, that the time which is to come, will come as quickly, and appear as little, and as unworthy to be suffered to tempt you away from eternity by its pleasures, which are but for a season, as the period of your life that is already gone. The very moment of your final farewell, if you are not previously cut short by death, which is a very possible thing, that moment will come, and old age will come, and the last sickness will come, and the dying bed will come, and the last look you shall ever cast upon your relations will come, and the agony of the parting breath will come, and the time that you will be stretched a lifeless corpse before the eyes of your weeping relations will come, and the coffin that is to enclose you will come, and that hour when the company assem-



bles to carry you to the churchyard will come, and that moment when you are put into the grave will come, and the throwing in of the earth upon it, all—all will come on every living creature who now hears me. And in a few little years the minister who now addresses you, and each one who now listens, will be carried to their long home: now all this will come. Yes, and the day of reckoning will come; and the appearance of the Son of God in heaven, and his holy angels around him will come; and the opening of the books will come; and the appearance of every one of you before the judgment-seat will come; and the solemn passing of the sentence which is to fix you for eternity will come; and if you refuse to be reconciled to God in the name of Christ, now that he is beseeching you to repent, and if you refuse to turn from the evil of your ways, and to do and to be what your Saviour requires you to be and to do, I must tell you what the sentence is, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

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### THE PULPIT GALLERY.

NO. I.

THE REV. THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.

*Professor of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh.*

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"A warrior in the Christian field  
Who never saw the sword he could not wield."  
COWFEE.

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THIS celebrated ornament of the church and of letters is a native of the county of Fife, Scotland, where his ancestors have long been distinguished and respected as substantial agriculturists. After receiving a grammatical education in the country, he removed to the college of Edinburgh, where he was marked as a diligent student; but did not evince any extraordinary vigour of intellect. Though destined for the ministerial office, he rather preferred the lectures of Professor Robison, who filled the mathematical chair, to those of Dr. Hunter, who presided over

the divinity class. Mr. Chalmers, however, did not neglect the peculiar studies more immediately requisite to qualify him for the important and varied duties of the pastoral care. In due course he was licensed as a probationary preacher, and after serving a short time as an assistant, he obtained a presentation to the living of Kilmany, over which cure he was regularly placed in 1802. This is a considerable port town on the northern shore of the Frith of Forth; which, from its situation, afforded ample scope for ministerial diligence. Mr. Chalmers spent some years here, without attracting any particular notice beyond the bounds of his parish, or producing any visible reformation in it upon the principles and manners of the people. His studies in fact were more directed to political economy than to practical theology; as his first literary performance evinced. It will seem extraordinary to most persons, that a man of learning, regularly educated for the ministry, and holding a benefice in such a country as Scotland, should have the spirit of religion to acquire, after exercising the teacher's office in a large parish for some years. The case however, though truly lamentable, is by no means singular. During a course of study on several branches of theology, connected with certain articles which he had engaged to write for an Encyclopædia projected by Dr. Brewster, he began to suspect the correctness of his former views of the Christian religion. In following up this doubt, he soon discovered the reason why his preaching against vice had been so inefficacious. At Kilmany he laboured for more than twelve years, and after his removal to Glasgow, where he had been invited to take charge of the Zion church, he published an address to his former parishioners, in which he gave an account of the great change that occurred in his ministerial conduct while resident among them. After ministering at the Zion church about three years, Dr. Chalmers was transferred to the more extensive charge of St. John's parish, in Glasgow, where he continued to labour with the most beneficial effect for several years, until he accepted the

chair of moral philosophy in the University of St. Andrew's, from whence he was removed in 1828 to the professorship of divinity at Edinburgh.

The popularity of this eminent divine is not an ephemeral admiration, gained by the art of an insinuating address, or the glare of a specious eloquence. His appearance in the pulpit is rather repulsive than inviting. The inflexibility of his features—his small pale eyes nearly half closed—his tone, at the commencement, low, and almost drawing—his utterance, naturally rough, made much more so by his broad Scotch accent—his gesture, though earnest, not remarkably expressive—his action, often inelegant and unappropriate, may almost prejudice a stranger against him. But he must be a very superficial observer, a very careless and insensible hearer, whose attention is not soon arrested and fixed. The eye kindling into unusual brilliancy—the countenance beaming with intelligence—the whole man labouring to give utterance to mighty conceptions:—all force the hearer to confess the preacher's power, and to feel that he is in the presence of a master-spirit of the age.

The *forte* of Dr. Chalmers is generally thought to be in his mighty power for illustrating the external and internal evidences of Christianity, and the identity of the whole system with the principles of sound philosophy. From the pulpit and through the press he has proved, most clearly and triumphantly, that all which is sound and true in philosophy leads to religion; that all which has a contrary tendency is, by the showing of philosophy herself, false and hollow.

Having placed a portrait of Dr. Chalmers in our group at the commencement of this volume, and associated him with the late Rev. Robert Hall, we will close this sketch by an article from the "Church of Ireland Magazine," in which these two eminent men are placed in juxtaposition, written, it has been thought, by the present bishop of Calcutta.

"TO COMPARE MR. HALL WITH ANOTHER SPLENDID GENIUS OF OUR AGE, DR. CHALMERS, is a difficult, and perhaps an invidious task. They are both highly

gifted and most powerful men, raised up and qualified for great service to the church of Christ; but they are very different in their style and character of mind. As to the use of the English language and purity of composition, Mr. Hall, the most elegant writer of his day, stands confessedly vastly superior to Dr. Chalmers, whose corruptions, neglects, inventions, and bad taste, make his finest discourses at times unintelligible. But this is an introductory and very inferior point. As to power of mind, I should think Dr. Chalmers the more daring and vigorous, and Mr. Hall the more delicate and acute reasoner. Dr. Chalmers is bold; Mr. Hall beautiful. Dr. Chalmers seizes one idea, which he expands by amplification and reiteration through a discourse; Mr. Hall combines and works up a variety of arguments in support of his topic; never loses sight of his point; touches every subject briefly, and with exquisite taste; and leaves an impression upon the mind more soft, more pleasing, but perhaps not much less powerful, than his great contemporary. Dr. Chalmers gives only one or two projecting truths, and leaves his subject confessedly incomplete: his sermons are composed of many separate thoughts slightly linked to one another; and like the reaches in the majestic course of the Rhine, which succeed each other by breaks, and expand upon the eye with extraordinary beauty when you enter them, but are succeeded by a narrow flow of the stream at each interval, his sermons are a succession of bold and magnificent truths wrought out with strength, and then left by the preacher, that he may press on to the next mighty idea. Mr. Hall's sermons are a beautiful whole; less daring in the general parts, but more closely connected; coming on the mind with greater conviction, and expanding his one important subject at once before the view; as the wide and fair lakes of Switzerland spread their varied, and complete, and connected beauties before the eye of the spectator. Dr. Chalmers, in short, is more impassioned, Mr. Hall more sublime; the one declaims, the other argues; the first storms the mind, the second charms it and unfolds all

its sympathies. Dr. Chalmers is adapted for the popular ear: his bold and reiterated statements, his overwhelming tide of words, his projecting and striking imagery, his small number of distinct thoughts enforced in various different forms; all make him the preacher for the crowded popular auditory. Mr. Hall is the preacher for the scholar, the student, the metaphysician, the man of elegant education, the fastidious proud despiser of spiritual religion, the pretender to a philosophy not thoroughly fathomed. His master-mind, his acute insight into the very inmost soul, his candour towards his opponents, his infinite reverence for Holy Scripture, his cautious conclusive argumentation, his delicate and sublime bursts of imagery, his superiority to party feelings and interests, ensure the attention, and fix the conviction, of every competent and unprejudiced hearer.

"As to **USEFULNESS**, the palm must be conceded, **FOR THE PRESENT AGE**, to Dr. Chalmers: he is more bold, more decisive, more capable of frequent effort, more ready to commit his unfinished compositions to the press, more negligent of the

minor graces which fetter Mr. Hall, and limit his efforts, and have left him, after fifty years of public life, the author of far fewer works, and those works of less extent and less general importance, than Dr. Chalmers has produced in one fourth portion of that time.

In **THE NEXT AGE**, it is possible Mr. Hall's publications may fetch up the way he appears to have lost in the present. All his practical writings will live, and exercise a powerful sway over the public mind, when many of Dr. Chalmers's may have done their work and been forgotten. Had Mr. Hall more of the bold and intrepid character of Dr. Chalmers; would he write with less anxiety and refinement; would he devote himself to the prosecution of some great national topic, touching the interests of morals and religion; would he disregard more his own feelings, in order to do good in a transitory world; there is nothing which he might not be capable of effecting, under God's blessing: for no man of the present age has gained the ear, and fixed the love and admiration of his countrymen more than Robert Hall."

## SERMON IV.

### GLORYING IN THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

BY THE REV. ROBERT NEWTON.

*"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."*—Rom. i. 16.

MAN is a creature of passion, as well as of reason; and although we readily admit that the latter is far superior to the former, and that it gives a distinctive peculiarity to our species, yet, still the movements and sensibilities of our species which come under the general description of passion, form a very essential and a very important part of our nature.

It is, however, my friends, a fact no less evident than it is lamentable, that human passions are awfully perverted and depraved by sin,—that they have taken a wrong direction, and are too generally exercised in direct opposition to their original design. This remark will hold good in its application to the general passion of shame of which the apostle speaks. This is a passion which was originally designed by the Author of our being to act the part of a sentinel, to give a sensible and salutary check and alarm, in case of any approach towards the precincts of folly or of crime. But so totally is this principle blinded and perverted, that we too frequently see human beings glorying in that of which they ought to be ashamed, and we see them ashamed of that in which they ought to glory; we see them pursuing unblushingly the paths of folly and of sin; whilst they are ashamed of the way of holiness, of Christ, and of the gospel. Where, however, converting grace takes place, a beneficial change is produced,—a change so real, so deep, so extensive, that old things are done away, and all things become new. One part of the change effected by the power of convert-

ing grace consists in rectifying every thing that is wrong in our passions, giving them the proper direction, and bringing them under the controlling influence of truth and of religion.

Behold, in the particular case of the great apostle of the Gentiles, these observations are exemplified. You are aware there was a period in his history when he courageously contended for his own imaginary excellencies, and for the abrogated rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic economy, while he was at the same time ashamed of Christ and of his gospel. Actuated by a zeal at once the most intolerant and the most blind, he haled to prison all he could find who called on the name of Jesus; not being ashamed to consent—indeed he did consent—to the death of the first Christian martyr; nor did he blush to witness that horrid deed.

But see what a complete reverse of character converting grace effected,—what a mighty moral revolution in all his thinkings, and feelings, and sayings, and doings. The recollection of his former prejudices, and errors, and cruelties covers him with confusion; he blushes with shame at the remembrance of them; and although God, for Christ's sake, had forgiven him, he never could forgive himself. But no longer is he ashamed of Christ, and of the gospel:—"What things," says he, "were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord." Not only do we now behold the Jew become a Chris-

tian, but we behold the persecutor become an apostle, and avowing himself the willing and courageous advocate of that faith which he had formerly madly destroyed. "So, as much as in me is," he says, "I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also;" I have preached it in other places—I have preached it "from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum;" and now I long to bear the same testimony for my divine Master in the imperial city. "For I am not ashamed"—I was once, but I am not now—"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

Let us mark the nature and the ground of this avowal,—the profession which the apostle makes,—and the reason for it which he assigns.

I. THE NATURE AND THE GROUND OF THIS AVOWAL. He professes himself "not ashamed of the gospel."

What is the gospel? The gospel is good news, glad tidings. It was announced by the angel who proclaimed the Saviour's advent, "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy." The gospel announces the best tidings that ever were published, the best news to which mortals ever listened,—news of salvation, tidings of a Saviour who is Christ the Lord,—light for those that are in darkness—pardon for those that are guilty—mercy for those that are miserable—liberty for those that are bound—salvation for those that are lost—life for those that are dead. The gospel comprehends the whole scheme of redemption—consisting, indeed, of doctrines, and of precepts, and of promises, and of threatenings, and of ordinances, which we are not about to detail this evening. But we call the gospel a system, because it consists of various parts; and yet, all its parts may be resolved into the one grand doctrine of redemption and salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." This is the record,—yes, and of all that is recorded this is the sum,—"God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son;" and

"he that hath the Son hath life." And although this dispensation of truth, of grace, and of salvation, was somewhat obscurely unfolded under earlier dispensations of the church, it is now made fully manifest by the appearing of our Saviour, Christ, who hath "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel."

Now, if we do not greatly mistake the apostle in the very frequent use he makes of the term "gospel," he directly and immediately means by it, the doctrine of salvation by a crucified Jesus. We give you our reasons for this.

When addressing the Corinthian church, the apostle explains the sense in which he uses this passage. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." Now, that was the very essence of the gospel in the apostolical sense of that expression—"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." Had he used the term in the vague and general sense in which it is employed by some,—had he intended nothing more by "the gospel," than the unity of the divine nature, the doctrine of divine providence, the immutable and everlasting distinctions between right and wrong, between vice and virtue,—the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, the great and golden rule of equity—"As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise;"—had the apostle meant nothing more than these things by "the gospel," he would never have dreamed of saying he was not ashamed of them.

It was not at these things that the literati of the day scoffed and derided; no, no,—it was at Christ crucified,—that doctrine so revolting to the pride of our fallen nature. Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block; and foolishness to the pride of the haughty Greek.

Aye, and to this very hour the Christian preacher may discourse on the doctrine of Deity,—he may preach on the doctrine of eternal providence,—he may preach on the soul's immortality, and man's moral accountability to the God that made him,—he may lecture as long as he pleases on the golden rule to which we have already adverted, and men will approve of this; infidels and semi-infidels will signify their approbation: but the moment he begins to speak about the doctrine of salvation by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, then they begin to scoff, and to sneer, and to deride this as the foolishness of folly. I say, therefore, had the apostle merely referred to these things, he had never dreamed of saying, "I am not ashamed of the gospel:" but, by "the gospel," he referred to the great doctrines of the cross; and in reference to them he says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."

And, besides this, he adds, in immediate connexion with the text, "For, therein"—Wherein? In this gospel,—"For therein," in this gospel, "is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." By "the righteousness of God" he does not mean the essential rectitude of the divine nature, but he means, God's method of constituting a sinner righteous in his sight, which is only through faith in the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now this gospel, this good news, is emphatically *the good news of Christ*. Those who published the good news were careful to inform those to whom they addressed it, that it did not originate with themselves, that they had received of the Lord that which they declared to the people. Not only as a Divine Person had the scheme its origination in the inmost mind of God our Saviour, but by him, as the great Mediator between God and man, it has been revealed. That expression in the epistle to the Hebrews is true to a much wider extent than is generally understood. Speaking of the gospel, he says, "Which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." Now, it did not first begin to be

spoken by the Lord when he exercised his personal ministry in our world, but in his appropriate character as the messenger of the covenant, the angel of Jehovah; all those rays of light, those beams and tints of mercy, that illumined the early dispensations, came from Christ, the star of Jacob; yes, just as certainly as the bright effulgence of evangelical light and truth with which we are surrounded, bursts from Christ, the glorious Sun of Righteousness. And, in addition to this early manifestation of this good news, in the fulness of time, in the exercise of his ministry, he published it as his own, and delivered it in his own name, and by his own right and authority; he has also signed it with his own hand, and sealed it with his own seal; and he has authenticated his signature and his seal with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to the will of God.

My friends, the gospel is divine, it is from heaven, and not of men; Jesus Christ is its *author*. And it is not only the good news of Christ coming from him, but it is the good news concerning him; for this gospel is the good news of Christ concerning his person, his works, his atoning acts, his saving benefits, his kingdom, his glory. Take these things out of the gospel, and what have you left behind? Examine those different editions of the gospel, if I may so express myself, which have been put forth at different periods of time, and under different dispensations of the church, and you will find they are full of Christ. That first edition in the patriarchal age, though certainly somewhat obscure, contained many promises of a deliverer, who was to suffer that he might save; that great deliverer was Christ, the promised seed that was to bruise the serpent's head; and the patriarchs saw these promises obscurely, as it were, and were persuaded of their truth; they embraced them, died in faith in the promised Messiah who was to come, and anticipated by faith the benefits of his death.

If you examine that edition of the gospel contained in the writings of the Hebrew prophets, you will find much

concerning the illustrious personage who was to appear in our world, who was to establish a kingdom, who was to extend his conquests and his triumphs, and whose kingdom was to have no end. Then this illustrious person was to suffer in order that he might reign. And who was this but the Lord Christ, to whom all the prophets bare witness?

And if you examine that splendid and imposing edition of the gospel contained in the Mosaic ritual, there is much gospel there. What find you there? You find types and shadows, and signs, and symbols, and figurative representations. Of all these types, Jesus Christ was the great antitype—of these shadows he was the substance—of these symbols Christ was the thing signified.

And then, if you examine the last and perfect edition of the gospel contained in the narrative of the evangelists, what find you? You find a most interesting history—a history of Christ—his birth, his life, his teaching, his ministry, his death, his resurrection, his exaltation to his kingdom. You find doctrines—the doctrines of Christ; you find precepts—the precepts of Christ; you find the promises—the promises of Christ; and you find the ordinances—the ordinances of Christ; every thing in the gospel is full of Christ.

Christ is also the *end* of the gospel. Every thing in the gospel is designed to conduct men to Christ, that they may know and love him, and believe in him, and resemble him, and love to honour him. Remember the record given of that extraordinary star which arrested the attention of the wise men in the east, and which they followed till it conducted them to the very spot where Jesus Christ was. Every thing in the gospel is to act the part of that star. If we fix our eye on it, it will conduct us to Christ, that we may know him and love him. What is the gospel without Christ? A cloud without water; a shadow without a substance; a body without a spirit.

Now, says the apostle, “of this gospel of Christ I am not ashamed;”—I am not confused; it does not make me blush; I am not discouraged by any thing in the gospel.

Let us ask four questions here.

*Of what is this spoken?* Of the gospel of Christ. As though the apostle had said, I am not ashamed of its *doctrines*. Are they not all wise? Are they not all important? Are they not all instructive? Are they not all of infinite concern to every human being. What is there in the gospel of Christ to make a wise man blush? The more carefully and prayerfully you examine them, the more you see their excellence and feel their importance. As though the apostle had said, I am not ashamed of the *precepts* of the gospel. Are they not all holy, and just, and good, and benevolent? What is there in any precept of the gospel of Jesus Christ of which a good man can be ashamed? I am not ashamed of the *threatenings* of the gospel. Though some have represented them as harsh and severe, they are all righteous, and they are all holy; they are all intended and directed against sin, and are all calculated to promote holiness and happiness. They are, therefore, only modifications of the goodness and love of their great Author. I am not ashamed of the *promises* of the gospel; they contain the very things we want. Are they not rich? Are they not admirable and various? Are they not sure and certain!—are they not “yea and amen” in Christ Jesus? What is there in the privileges and promises of the gospel to make a Christian blush? I am not ashamed of the *ordinances* of the gospel. It is true, they are few in number, and very simple in their nature; but they are highly significant; they are full of meaning, and are efficacious whenever they are properly dispensed and advocated.

I am not ashamed of the gospel as the gospel of Christ, its divine Author. Though meanly born in Bethlehem—though for him there was no room in the inn—though born in a stable, and laid in a manger—though the reputed son of a carpenter—though when he came forth from obscurity, and entered on his public ministry, he had not where to lay his head—though he was persecuted, though he was crucified, though he suffered and died—though all this was true, yet he rose triumphant as a God, and by him.

resurrection from the dead was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness. He is, therefore, the Prince of Life, the Conqueror of Death, the Lord of Glory, the Captain of our salvation; and I am, therefore, not ashamed of him.

*By whom is this spoken?* "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." And who am I? Is this the language of some individual whose early prejudices, and biases, and impressions, were all in favour of the gospel? And is he so completely fettered by these prejudices of education and habit, that he is absolutely incompetent fairly and dispassionately to examine this gospel? Nay, my friends, you know the reverse of this was the fact; you know that all this man's prejudices, and early habits, and impressions were directly and violently opposed to the gospel, that he was "exceedingly mad against this way," and that he was prejudiced, and so full of blind, intolerant zeal, that, when he was persecuting the friends of the gospel, he thought he was "doing God service." And yet, such is the conviction that he has of the divinity and efficacy of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that all his prejudices and early impressions were entirely destroyed; and he avows himself not ashamed of the gospel—"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."

Who am I? Is this the language of some individual, with a warm heart, indeed, but with a very weak head—a man of a very slender understanding—a man capable of being carried away by strong impulses—who can examine nothing, but is ready to believe every thing—a man without any learning or science? Is it so? We know, my friends, that just the contrary to this is the fact. It is this man, emphatically the *great*—the *great* apostle of the Gentiles, a most extraordinary man;—perhaps he was one of the greatest of all the great men that the great God ever made. How lofty his powers of intellect!—how keen, how penetrating, how comprehensive! What a mind he had! And then his learning, too,—how various and profound!—how far beyond his contemporaries! And yet this man, with all these natural talents,

so various, so powerful,—with all his acquired abilities, and learning, and superior talents,—this man, so signally and pre-eminently qualified to examine any thing in order to ascertain its merits or demerits,—this great man, with these great powers, here avows that he is "not ashamed of the gospel of Christ!" And who art thou that art arrogating to thyself lights superior to St. Paul, and art affecting to find things in the gospel which make thee blush? Blush, indeed, for thyself; and, if thou canst not do this, others will blush for thee. Hide thy diminished head in the dust! What! *thou* affecting to be ashamed of the gospel, and such a man as St. Paul not ashamed of it! It would be a good reason for thee, were no other to be found, rather to glory, because St. Paul gloried in this gospel.

Let us ask a third question, *To whom was this spoken?* To whom was this profession made? To some rude, and remote, and barbarous, and savage, horde!—to men without any kind of cultivation, or science, who were absolutely incompetent to examine into that concerning which this man avows he is not ashamed! Is it so? No, my friends; this proposition was addressed to those who dwelt in the imperial city: this avowal was made to the Romans, the inhabitants of the capital city of the world,—Rome, the seat of universal empire, the residence of statesmen, and poets, and artists, and historians, and philosophers—the seat of science and literature, where lived men the splendour of whose genius shed a lustre on the imperial city that commanded the admiration of the world.

Here is a sort of implication here, as if some one had said, St. Paul has gone round about, from Jerusalem to Illyricum, talking about Christ crucified; but when he is at Rome, he will change his voice; he will blush to talk about the cross of Christ then; he will blush to talk about the cross of Christ among philosophers and sages. He will then begin to say fine things about the Supreme Being. He will begin to harangue them on eternal providence, on the immortality of the soul; but not a word will he say about the cross of Jesus Christ.—Do they say so?



He will prove the contrary. I will let every one know, as though St. Paul said, when I get to Rome, that I will avow him *there*: I will not blush to talk about him *there*: I will take my stand; and, standing side by side with the philosophers and the sages, I will announce something that is of infinitely more importance than any thing they ever conceived. I am not ashamed of the gospel, though in the service of the gospel I endure toil, and insult, and obloquy: I am not ashamed of the gospel, though in my attempts to propagate it, I may be in perils often, "in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren:" still I am not ashamed.

"I am not ashamed of the gospel." Some who hear me may understand the philosophy of language; and they know that, in this peculiar form of speech, there is great emphasis, great meaning, more than appears on the face of it. "I am not ashamed of the gospel." It is equal to the most courageous and triumphant avowal of the gospel: as though he said, So far am I from being ashamed of the gospel, that I make my boast of the gospel; so far am I from being dishonoured by the gospel, that the gospel is to me my greatest glory, my honour, my crown. As though he had said, I despise every thing in comparison with the gospel. Had he learning? Yes, he had, and knew its worth. I despise all my learning, in comparison with the gospel. Had he science? Yes, he had, and knew its use. I despise all my science, in comparison of the gospel of Christ. Had he talents? Yes, and of a very high order. I despise all my talents, in comparison with the gospel. I will bring all my honours to the foot of the cross, and say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." I am not ashamed of the gospel when I am at liberty—I am not ashamed of the gospel when I am in bonds—I am not ashamed of the gospel when I am among its friends—I blush not to acknowledge it among its foes:—I am not ashamed of the

gospel while I have life—I will not be ashamed of it when I die.

Now, for a profession like this, such a man must have had some good reason to assign, something to justify the profession. What was it? Does he say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" because it is true? Had it been false, he would have blushed to own it. Does he say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ," not only because it is true, but because it is important? Had it been a frivolous thing, he would have been ashamed to go about proclaiming it. Does he say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel," because it is Christ's gospel? On the admission that the gospel comes from Christ, it follows that we have no more reason to be ashamed of the gospel, than of Christ, its author; it follows that whatever comes from him must be worthy of him. Another reason, however, is assigned: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, *for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth.*" Not only in point of theory is it worthy the approbation of every well-constituted mind; but, in point of fact, brought to the test of experience, it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth: a good reason this.

In this general view, there are two or three things to be noticed.

The first is, *the divine energy of the gospel*: "the power of God." What is this power? There was, you are aware, a marvellous power, which marked the first promulgation of the gospel: the men who announced the good news were enabled to authenticate the tidings they published, by performing many illustrious miracles. Now there seemed a peculiar fitness in this, under the then existing circumstances. It is very true that, when they preached the gospel to their countrymen, the Jews, they had the Jewish Scriptures to appeal to, and they reasoned out of the Scriptures, proving from them that Jesus was Christ. But what could they do when they went among Greeks and Romans? There were no Jewish Scriptures to which they could appeal, then: and, therefore, it seemed peculiarly fit, the great Author of the gospel should

accredit these men, by investing them with extraordinary powers, enabling them to work miracles in confirmation of the message. They preached the gospel; and then they proved that the message they delivered was from God, by healing the sick, cleansing the leper, giving sight to the blind, raising the dead—performing all these miracles and mighty deeds, on purpose to authenticate their message.

You are aware that many expositors, and many Christian preachers, have thus interpreted the energy of which the apostle here speaks. However, with all deference to very high names, I beg to state that I do not think that the apostle here principally, if at all, refers to miraculous powers. The apostle is here speaking of a power that was universal among all believers—a power that reaches “to every one that believeth.” But there is no evidence that the power to work miracles was given to every believer in the primitive church. There were some churches, which were highly distinguished in this way—the church of Corinth, for example; but it does not appear that all had this power; all did not heal the sick, all did not raise the dead. The apostle is here speaking of a power that is universal as faith; every believer was under the influence of this power, but every believer had not the power to work miracles: the apostle, therefore, does not refer to this. Besides, he is speaking of a power connected with salvation; and I confess I do not see the connexion between the power to work miracles and the conversion of a man’s soul. I think the two things are essentially distinct; and I think there may be the one where the other is not. Read St. Paul’s epistle to the Corinthians, and see how I am there borne out in this remark. How many had the one who were sadly deficient in the other! And does not the apostle suppose—and, under the influence of plenary inspiration, he could not have supposed a thing that could not have happened—he supposed that a man may have the power to work miracles, and even to remove mountains, though his heart may be destitute of vital piety: whereas, he is here speaking of a power that is “unto salvation.”

There are two senses in which the gospel is the power of God, independently of the power to work miracles. *The gospel, as a system of divine truth, is the most powerful thing the world ever saw.* How powerful in its authority! It comes clothed in the authority of Him whose will is law, and whose power is absolute. How powerful again in its evidence! Is it not attested by all the evidence of which, from the nature of the subject, it is capable! How powerful in its motives! Oh, how stirring are the motives of the gospel! How powerful in its influence! What powerful representations does it present before us of the evil of sin—that odious and abominable thing which a holy God hateth! How powerful, again, in its representations of the beauty of holiness! How lovely, and attractive, and powerful, and moving, in its displays of the mercy of God, of the love of Christ, of the joy of religion,—of the felicities of heaven,—of the torments of hell! How does it address those two great movers of the human mind and character—hope, and fear!—fear of the evil we have to experience—hope of the good we have to receive. It connects eternity with time,—it is a powerful hammer to break the rocky heart in pieces—it is a powerful fire to penetrate into the inmost recesses of the human mind.

There is, however, a still higher sense in which the gospel is the power of God. I know the gospel is truth—and, therefore, it is powerful; simple truth—and, therefore, more powerful; divine truth—and, therefore, most powerful of all truth. And we must take care we do not attribute too much to the mere letter of the gospel, to the mere sentiments and ideas of the gospel. *The gospel is the power of God, because it is the ordinary instrument whereby the energy of God, the Holy Ghost, is communicated to the hearts of men.* The gospel is the dispensation of the Spirit, and the Spirit is a dispensation of power; and, where the gospel is faithfully preached, the Spirit of power is present; so that while the word of the gospel falls on the ear, and the ideas of the gospel are communicated to the understanding, the power of the Holy Ghost touches the

heart and the conscience, and the gospel comes "not in word only," though it does come in word, "but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."

Take into consideration the *four* following circumstances, and try to ascertain the greatness of that power that marked the first propagation of the gospel.

In the first place, *the powerful, combined, and universal opposition which it had to contend with.* Every thing rose in opposition against the gospel; all the prejudices of the people, all the bad passions of the people, all the institutions of the people, the craft of the people being in danger—yea, and the civil arm, too, lifted up, and the whole world in arms against the gospel.

Then, again, *the feeble, and slender, and (humanly speaking) incompetent instruments employed.* What, was a considerable army sent forth in full equipment, with fire and sword, to dragoon the nations into a profession of Christian faith? No, my friends, the weapons of their warfare were not carnal. There is no way by which coercion can travel and arrive at a man's mind; mental error cannot be cut to pieces by the sword. These men went forth—twelve simple, artless men—penniless and powerless; with nothing but simple truth to publish, and in that name to conquer the world; the world being up in arms against them wherever they go, and yet the world conquered by them!

Think, in the next place, *what the gospel had to do.* It had to produce a moral renovation; it had to illuminate the mind, to sanctify the heart, to regulate the life, to make all things new. I do not wonder, then, that these were said to be men who "turned the world upside down." Yes, indeed; but the moral world was wrong side up. And yet it triumphed.

Think of the *extent of the triumph.* To such an extent did they carry the gospel that the language which the Psalmist uttered, in reference to the heavenly bodies, was applied to the extensive conquests of these men by the gospel: "Their line is gone through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."

Think, then, of this universal opposition—think of the feeble instruments employed—think of what the gospel had to do, and the wide extent to which it travelled and triumphed, and say, was not this the power of God? On what other principle can you possibly account for the fact, that the gospel, under such circumstances, did thus triumph?

Ah, my friends! and the gospel is still the power of God. I confess to you all, that if I did not believe the gospel still to be the power of God, I should utterly despair of any such effects. One man cannot change the heart of another. Not the language employed—not the ideas communicated; oh, no! there must be an energy divine; the power of the Lord must be present, and that power must apply the truth; and, therefore, we see the power of God still manifested. Take an instance now.

On Sabbath evening last but one, in the town of Devonport, a poor, besotted, careless old man—an old man-of-war's man, I believe—came into the chapel, and those who knew him best, believed he had never spent five minutes in his life in thinking, "What am I? Whither am I going? Is there another world? Have I a soul as well as a body?" He saw a large crowd, and he thought he would try to get in. He succeeded in the attempt; and it pleased the Lord, though the preacher drew the bow at a venture, to direct an arrow that hit, and an arrow that pierced that old sailor's inmost soul, and to stick fast there; he was judged of all—he was condemned of all; the tears began to gush from those eyes that had scarcely ever wept before, and he began to sigh. As he returned home, he wept, and said to a person, "I cannot rest till God has mercy on me; my conscience condemns me: I am guilty; I am perishing; what shall I do?" And the person told me, the following evening, that he was still pleading with the Lord, determined not to rest till he found redemption in the blood of Christ. Now, I ask you, what was that but the power of God?

Take another instance illustrative of the power of the gospel.

Here is a Pharisee (the Pharisees were

not peculiar to the Jews of old time; there are Pharisees under the Christian name and garb, who think themselves righteous and despise others,) here is an old man, now, grey in his Pharisaism; and, in the pride of his heart, he has been saying, many years, "Stand by, for I am holier than thou." Many a time he has affected to thank his Maker that he was not as other men—no drunkard, no profane swearer, no Sabbath-breaker. Many a time has he said, "All these things have I kept from my youth up." He has erected for himself, by his own skill, and by the might of his own arm, a lofty superstructure of self-righteousness, and thinks the materials of it very sound, and considers himself perfectly secure in it. Even this is brought into contact with the gospel; and what is the gospel in such a case? It is a conductor to convey the lightning, not from it, but to it. Struck by the lightning of heaven, the power of God, this superstructure of self-righteousness is shivered to atoms, and all the props, and pillars, and dependencies of the Pharisee are broken to pieces; and there you behold him on his knees, with uplifted hands and contrite heart, for the first time in his life, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" What is this? This is the power of God.

The gospel has not lost its power; the gospel is still accompanied by the influence of the Spirit. Here lies our strength—here lies our hope. The gospel is powerful to wound, and it is powerful to heal; it is powerful to pull down, and it is powerful to build up again; it is powerful to kill a man's self-confidence, and it will save "with all the power of an endless life." And, therefore, the apostle speaks of the *saving efficacy* of this gospel: "it is the power of God to salvation." The salvation of the gospel is a salvation from sin. Man has sinned—all have sinned; and, because all have sinned, all are guilty; and, because all are guilty, all are obnoxious to punishment. But Jesus Christ is the Saviour; he came into the world to save sinners; to save sinners he lived, to save sinners he died, to save sinners he rose from the dead, to save sinners he took human na-

ture up to the right hand of the Majesty on high, where "he ever liveth to make intercession for the transgressors;" and "he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." He saves from sin, from the guilt and power of sin, from the pollution of sin, and from the penalty due to sin.

Now, the gospel not only unfolds this salvation in all its length, and breadth, and fulness, and glory, but it becomes the instrument of communicating the salvation it has to unfold. Look at the man who is saved by the gospel; his mind is enlightened, his will is subdued, his conscience is washed from guilt, his affections are sanctified, his life is formed according to the precepts of the gospel; he becomes, not physically, but spiritually and morally, a new creature. He is saved from darkness to light; he is saved from bondage to glorious liberty; he is saved from sin to holiness; he is saved from misery to happiness; he is saved from death to life. Look at this man, and see the happy change that has taken place, and ask by what this is produced? By the gospel of Christ. Shall we, then, be ashamed of it!—of the gospel of Christ, that saves men—that makes men wise, and happy, and holy in themselves—the gospel of Christ, by the power and influence of which vice is subdued, so that he who was a drunkard is become sober, and he who was a swearer fears an oath, and he who was dissolute becomes chaste? And by what means was this effected? By the gospel of Christ.

The gospel of Christ has done more to make men holy and happy in a few weeks, or months than all the boasted systems of philosophy and science put forth by the sages of Greece and Rome could effect in ages. They could not bring the inhabitants of an obscure village to live according to their views of moral science. But oh, what does the gospel accomplish! I do not wonder that not a man durst accept the challenge of St. Paul:—"Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world?" Ah, where are you now? You laughed at me and the gospel—you thought I was a foolish man, and had no-

thing but the foolishness of folly to proclaim! But where are the elements with which you were to renovate mankind! Where are the victories you have won! Where are the trophies of your triumphs! If you have conquered to this extent, point us to the countries—tell us where the countries are. Not a man of them has a word to say. But St. Paul could point to many nations which had been subdued by the gospel to the obedience of the faith.

Let it be observed, however, that this gospel is the power of God to *every one that believeth*—not to every one that *heareth*; it is one thing to hear the gospel, and it is another thing to believe the gospel so as to be saved by it. On this point, our individual, personal salvation, hangs—“to every one that believeth”—believeth what? To every one that believeth the gospel to be of Christ, to be what it professes to be—and who gives full credence to the testimony that “this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;” and that there is no other name given amongst men whereby they may be saved.

I know that some people, very incautiously, as it seems to me, undervalue this; and I have heard persons say it is nothing to believe this. We know it is something. A man may be saved from infidelity who believes the gospel to be true, and who believes Jesus to be the Son of God. Still there are those who tell us that they believe the gospel is of divine origin, and yet are not saved; the credence which they attach to testimony does not exert any influence on their hearts or conduct; they are living “without God in the world;” their faith does not come up to the apostolic standard. What believing in order to be saved is, we are told by St. Paul in another place, when he says, “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” He does not say with the head merely, or with the understanding; I know the understanding will perceive that I am a sinner, and that Christ is the Saviour; but I must not stop here; if I do, I stop short of salvation. There must be the dedication of

the heart to Christ; there must be the submission of the will to Christ—the close determination of the will; and there must be the embracing of the Saviour with all the affections of the heart. Thus man, believing with the heart unto righteousness, confession is made with the tongue unto salvation; and, my fellow-sinner, if thou “confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved:” according to thy faith it shall be done unto thee—in every step of thy religious progress, and in the way of spiritual attainment, it shall be done according to thy faith. Thus believing becomes a settled habit; and thus the Christian lives by faith, and is saved by faith.

Observe the impartiality of this—“*To every one that believeth*”; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek;” for “unto the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life.” “To every one that believeth,” without respect to condition—whether they are high or low, whether they are rich or poor, noble or ignoble. There is not one salvation for a rich man, and another for a poor man: no, it must be by faith, simple faith in Christ Jesus. “To every one that believeth,” without respect to colour; for souls have no discriminating hues; God has made and redeemed by his blood *all* nations that dwell on the face of the earth; to every one, therefore, from the fair European to Afric’s sable son, it will apply; from the everlasting snow and frost and ice of Greenland and Lapland, to the paradisaical islands that lie on the bosom of the Southern Ocean. The gospel, being a universal remedy, will operate in every temperature, from the frigid to the torrid zone; and, wherever it is truly received, it works effectually in them that believe. “To every one that believeth,” without regard to circumstances; for in Jesus Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all.”

“To every one that believeth”—without regard to language or tongue. The period shall come when the gospel shall be published, and when the gospel shall be embraced by all the languages of this

babbling world! What a miracle was that which took place on the day of Pentecost—when the apostles of our Lord in a single moment received the knowledge of languages they had never studied in the ordinary way; and received the power to give utterance to their sentiments most correctly and fluently—which was a greater miracle still; so that these Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, the dwellers in Mesopotamia and in Judea, Cretes and Arabians, and others which are mentioned, all heard the apostles speak every man in the language wherein he was born—that is, the language spoken in the country of their birth—the wonderful works of God. Think you that this was not designed by Providence to be a sort of earnest and specimen of what will assuredly take place when, by means of Bible institutions and missionary efforts, the languages of the world shall have the word of God rendered into them (and into a large portion has it already been rendered) and the word of God preached in those languages—so that not only European and American, but Asiatic and African, and those that dwell in the remote islands of the sea, shall hear Christ and the apostles, and Moses and the prophets, declare the wonderful works of God in the redemption and salvation of men.

Now, see how all this bears on the profession made by the apostle: “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth.” Had it been a powerless thing, the apostle would have blushed to have been identified with it; had it been powerful to destroy, and not to save, he would have been ashamed to own it; had it been designed for the benefit of a few individuals, the apostle would never have laboured for its propagation. But, when he says it is the power of God, not to destroy, but to save—when he says, “It is the power of God to every one that believeth,” good reason had he to say—good reason have we also to say, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.”

Let us learn from this subject *the evil of religious cowardice, and take care to avoid it*. If the apostle had been a coward, the avowal in the text would never have been

made; had he been a coward in the service of his Master, the declaration of the text had never been recorded; had himself and his colleagues been cowards, they had not gone on in the face of opposition, and insult, and danger, and death; but, when persecution arose, every one of them could say, “None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” I know but one instance in which Paul was nearly overcome; and that was when his courage and his heroism were nearly overpowered by the sympathy and tenderness of his friends, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. The servant of the Lord had preached, and Jesus had blessed his preaching; he had given his servant seals to his ministry, and they were his spiritual children. Ah, but he must leave them! The parting work was hard work, and their tears all but overcame the apostle. And what said he? “What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart?” I can face danger; I can look my enemies in the face; I hesitate not to declare the gospel, though stripes and imprisonments await me; I can go to the stake for the sake of the gospel; I can endure all this; but these tears overcome me! “What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart?” No; he remembered whose servant he was; he remembered the high office he sustained; and, summoning up all his courage, rising above the tenderness of friendship, he exclaimed, “I am ready to go bound to Jerusalem, and to die for the name of the Lord Jesus!”

But who are the men who are ashamed of the gospel? Certainly there is no being in heaven who is ashamed of the gospel; angels are not ashamed of the gospel; “the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow,” were the things which “the angels desired to look into.” The redeemed of Adam’s race that are halloved and made meet for heaven, and who have obtained admission there—they are not ashamed of the gospel; they are attributing to the gospel the glory of conducting them to that blessed inheritance

of light and love. Where, then, do we find those who are ashamed of the gospel? Do you think any of the beings in the infernal world would be ashamed of it could it be preached to them as the instrument of salvation? Would not every eye glisten, and every countenance beam with attention? Ah! but their doom is sealed! Their harvest is past!—Their summer is ended!—They cannot be saved!

Where, then, do we find those who are ashamed of the gospel? Why, if they can be found any where, they must be found on earth; they are nowhere else. Can we find any among the truly wise, the truly good, the truly useful, the truly holy? I know no such person. Who are the men that are ashamed of the gospel? Why the men who ought to be ashamed of themselves! What! ashamed of the system of divine truth—a system that is full of goodness, and benevolence, and holiness—a system so worthy of God, so adapted to the circumstances of men! Ashamed of the gospel of Christ!—No, no! Let the proud, haughty infidel be ashamed of his gloomy and degraded system, (if system it may be called,) a system which degrades man into a kind of rational animal, making him the inhabitant of a body which, when it has answered its purpose, for any thing he can tell to the contrary, must be laid in darkness and in death, and man must cease to be. Is this the dignity of human nature? What was the case with respect to one of those blood-stained infidels in this metropolis, eight or ten years ago? At the fatal spot, just before the men were sent out of time into eternity, with a levity and impiety that outraged all decency, he exclaimed at the last moment, "We shall soon learn the secret." To learn the secret—but to learn it when it is too late! "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united!" Ashamed of the gospel of Christ!—Let the wicked profligate blush at his deeds of darkness that will not bear the light, and which he will not bring to the light, lest they be made manifest; but never let the Christian blush to own the holy gospel. Ashamed of the gospel of Christ!

—Where is the philosopher that is ashamed of the God of nature? And shall you and I, then, be ashamed of the God of grace? Ashamed of the gospel of Christ!—Where is the Jew that is ashamed of Moses? And shall the Christian and the Christian minister be ashamed of Christ? God forbid! Ashamed of Christ!—No, no! let me be ashamed of myself, (much reason have I for that), but never let me be ashamed of Christ! Ashamed of the gospel! no: let me be ashamed of the world, but never, never let me be ashamed of the gospel of Christ!

Learn, my friends, *the necessity of consistency in your religious profession*. See the consistency of this profession of the text: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; it is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth." How do you sustain and justify that profession? Is there harmony between your profession and your actions? Do you who say you are not ashamed of the gospel realize its efficacy? Can you assign this as the reason why you are not ashamed of it—because it has saved you from sin, saved you from all unchristian tempers, dispositions, and desires? Are you ashamed, my dear friends? In vain do you say you are not ashamed of the gospel, unless you have this reason to give—"it is the power of God to salvation." Have you so believed as to be saved? Have not some Christian professors need to be admonished here. There is a want of harmony between the words of the lips, and the works of the lives? You are not ashamed of the gospel, and yet live in opposition to the gospel; not ashamed of the gospel, and yet violating the precepts of the gospel. Not ashamed of the gospel of Christ! But the gospel of Christ is ashamed of you. Not ashamed of the ministers and friends of the gospel; but the ministers and friends of the gospel are ashamed of you! Not ashamed to confess Christ crucified before men; but, unless you are speedily changed, and saved by the gospel—of you—yes, of you, will Jesus Christ be ashamed before his Father and his holy angels. May God give you repentance unto life!

As the gospel of Christ is the power of God to salvation to them that believe, *let those who have through grace believed, and have realized the saving power of his gospel, zealously and practically acknowledge their obligation to make it known to others.* It is our mercy that we have the gospel. How great a blessing is it! How rich a treasure is it! And what has it not done for us! How it has blessed us, and saved us! But we have it not for ourselves merely—not for our personal benefit exclusively: we have it for others, to bless others as well as ourselves. There is a sense in which every Christian minister, and every Christian believer, as well as St. Paul, is a trustee allowed of God to be put in trust of the gospel, intrusted with the gospel for the benefit of those who have it not. Therefore, you are the debtors; and in debt you remain till you impart to them the gospel of God. Can it be that we feel this power, enjoy this liberty, participate in these blessings ourselves, and be unconcerned for those who are destitute?

Can it be that I am in the road to heaven, and wish to travel there alone? Can it be that I am saved of the Lord myself, and have no concern that my fellow-sinners should be saved? I profess to you I see not how it can be. The religion of the gospel is essentially diffusive in its nature, diffusive as the breadth of the earth; and, in proportion as our hearts are brought under its influence, however contracted before, they are now expanded and drawn out; we wish our fellow-men to become our fellow-subjects in the kingdom of heaven; we wish them all to become partakers of "like precious faith with us," and to be "fellow-heirs of the same hope." Our gracious Lord says, "Freely ye have received, freely give." Why, we have given something; how little! We have felt something; but how little! We have prayed now and then; ah, how feeble have been our prayers! How little has been done by the professing Christian world for the evangelization of the pagan! Oh, could we take our post of observation where the prophet stood—could the whole length and breadth of the valley of dry bones come within

the range of our mortal vision—could we see the dismal spectres of superstition flitting before our eyes—could we behold six hundred millions of our fellow-beings in the lowest moral and mental prostration, buried in ignorance, enthralled by superstition, loaded with guilt, polluted with crime, without God, without comfort, without hope! Oh, this would give intensity to our feelings—this would give fervour to our prayers—this would give vigour to our exertions!—and we should be ready to ask ourselves and one another, "What can we do to send them 'words whereby they may be saved?' What can we do to send them the word, 'the entry' of which 'giveth life?'"

As the gospel is identified with the power of God, *let us expect our efforts for its propagation to be crowned with success.* "What a noise," said a person the other day, "what a noise they make about their Bibles and Missions: what a noise they make about sending their Bibles and their missionaries to the pagans: and what time they are consuming, and what money they are expending! Ah," said he, "but they will find human nature to be just what human nature always has been, and will leave the world just as bad as they find it." And if I had the same views of Christianity which he entertained, I suppose I should sit side by side with him, and come to the same conclusion. But I fearlessly assert there is one single word in my text which lays prostrate every thing that can be urged against missionary exertions,—urged in the way of objection, by cold indifference, by freezing avarice, by chilling doubt, or by impious unbelief: it is this one word—*power*—"the power of God." Oh! talk no more about the power of prejudice,—talk no more about the power of ignorance,—talk no more about the power of superstition, and passion, and caste: I admit these are great powers; but there is a power in my text infinitely greater,—a power that can triumph over all the powers of earth and hell. Here is a power that can overcome the power of sin; here is a power that can subdue the power of passion; here is a power that can break the power of prejudice; and here is a power that can snap



the chains of oppression,—“the power of God.” Let this simple but powerful engine be applied, and what shall be the result? It will pull down strongholds, cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and will bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Yes, let this engine be applied to the very centre of idolatry and superstition,—let its props and its supporting pillars be but seized by the grasp of truth, and they will very soon rock to their base, and totter to their fall; their whole fabric will be broken, and the dust thereof driven before the winds of heaven.

And what then, my Christian friends? Why, then shall be seen rising up every where, in beautiful proportion, the fair temple of truth,—a temple whose porticoes shall stand wide open, that the heavy laden and the weary may have free access, and there find repose,—a temple whose ministers shall say to every inquiring soul, “Come in, come in, thou blessed of the Lord: wherefore standest thou without?”—a temple where people of every colour, and of every language, and of every clime, shall harmonize and commingle together in the delightful service of Christian worship, adoring and blessing Him who is the Maker and the Redeemer of them all,—a temple whose altars shall flame with the love and the gratitude of a redeemed and renovated world: for it shall come to pass that in every place, “from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts.”

Well, now, my Christian friends, to contribute in any way, in any degree, to realize such a consummation—who is not solicitous? Ashamed be the man, whoever he is, who can ever think on this subject without emotion! For such an object can any sacrifice be too painful, can any labours be too abundant? My friends, you have come up together as the friends of the gospel, as the friends of Jesus, as the friends of men. You are come here to contribute in aid of the funds of the Wesleyan Missionary Society,—a society that already employs some two hundred and twenty preaching missionaries, or thereabouts, in different parts of the world,—a society that has already numbered among the members of the Christian church some forty-three thousand persons, gathered into the fold by the zeal, the labours, the prayers, the faithful preaching, and the holy living, by God’s blessing, of these ministers,—a society that has schools connected with its missions, where some five-and-twenty thousand are instructed in the momentous verities of our common Christianity. What a work is this!—and what a prominent place are you taking, in the providence of God, in this great work of evangelizing the world! Many voices from many hundred tribes are saying, “Come over and help us: give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.” And can you refuse? What! have you oil, and will you not pour a portion into their lamps, which have gone out, that they may be kindled afresh? Will your lamps burn less brightly? Oh, no! The more you communicate, the more you shall receive fresh supplies of the oil of the sanctuary, and your lamps will burn far more brightly.

## SERMON V.

### THE ORIGIN, UNIVERSALITY, AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE APOSTACY OF MAN.

• BY THE REV. JAMES PARSONS.

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*‘By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.’—Rom. v. 12.*

How vastly important is it that we should entertain correct views with regard to the position and the character of the moral world! Mistakes with regard to the construction and the movement of the *material* universe may sometimes, perhaps, be entertained without giving rise to any considerable injury; but mistakes with regard to the *moral* universe, either in its attributes, its laws, or its responsibilities, never can be indulged without producing effects which, in their consequences, are most mischievous and most deadly. To these perilous mistakes, it must be observed, man in all ages is prone in consequence of the depravity of his nature. The practice has been exemplified in past ages, and it is exemplified now; and were there no guidance, no influence except that which arises from his own mind, the uniform and unbroken dominion of falsehood would prevail, attended by all its consequences of unmitigated misery and sorrow.

The value of the record of divine truth, my Christian brethren, from this circumstance, will doubtless appear to be unspeakable and infinite. It illustrates and comprises every principle respecting which man may desire to be informed, and which is associated with the preservation of his interests and welfare. Its narratives and doctrines, its precepts and its promises, its threatenings and its warnings, all tend to our ultimate happiness as the subjects of the moral government of God, and as the heirs of an unchange-

able retribution. How much of valuable revelation, for instance, is comprised in the words which have been selected as the text! What important intelligence does it comprise as to the various phenomena which we observe to be constantly taking place around us, with regard to the government of the Almighty and the everlasting destinies of mankind! What reflection it is adapted to inspire—what improvement it is calculated to produce! If, my Christian brethren, on your own minds the facts and principles which are contained in the announcement before us, along with those other statements to which they refer, produce their due impression, it is unquestionable that the eternal welfare of your souls will be secured. If, on the other hand, these facts and these principles be despised and rejected, it is as unquestionable that those interests will be in danger—that you will be abandoned to the empire of falsehood, and have no prospect before you except that of agony and unmitigated horror, from which there is no possible redemption.

From these views let us now proceed to meditate on the important statement of the apostle that, “by one man entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”

The immediate connexion in which the text appears will not require any thing like preliminary explanation; we therefore proceed to observe that your attention will now be directed,

I. To the origin and diffusion of sin—“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that *all have sinned*.”

II. To the origin and diffusion of death, “As by one man sin entered into the world, and *death by sin*, and so *death* passed upon *all men*; for that all have sinned.” And,

III. We shall mention those reflections by which our views of the combined origin and diffusion of sin and death may be duly and savingly sanctified.

I. We have from these words to notice THE ORIGIN AND DIFFUSION OF SIN.

1st. As to the *origin of sin*.—“By one man sin entered into the world.”

Sin, my brethren, you are aware, according to the admirable definition of Scripture, is “*the transgression of the law*.” The law is that rule which has been issued and imposed by Almighty God, as the supreme and sovereign ruler of the universe, for the unqualified and perfect obedience of his intelligent and immortal creatures, whether in thought or action; and any want of conformity, in our practical deportment, to that law, either in thought, or in action, is truly and emphatically sin. It will, of course, be understood that the “one man” by whom sin entered into the world was Adam, the first parent of our race. His history is connected with the important and momentous fact before us, and is given to us in the sacred Scriptures in a method the most succinct and clear. He was emphatically created, as we are informed, after the image of the Almighty, in righteousness and true holiness, having in his nature no one stain of impurity to mar the dignity and grandeur by which he had been invested. In that state he was placed in the garden of Eden, a fair, embalmed, and lovely spot, which had been enriched, by the grace and mercy of JEHOVAH, with every thing that could minister to delight and joy. In that place of residence we behold, also, a test of obedience, by which might be ascertained and discovered the relation existing between the creature and the Creator. We are hence informed that, “The Lord God planted a garden eastward of Eden; and

there he put the man he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” With regard to the latter it is said, “The Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it.”

Here, you will observe, then, was the law, the particular commandment of which must be viewed as being in connexion with an important general design, showing the right of God to command—showing the obligation of man to obey—and showing also the responsibility and the final account which man must render to the Almighty for his conduct, as a ruler and as a judge. Satan, that fallen spirit, who by disobedience had been hurled from heaven and heavenly glory, animated by malignant hatred to God and to holiness, we are informed, became the tempter of Adam and of the woman whom God had given him as a helpmeet, that he might induce them to disobey the law under which they had been placed, and thereby introduce transgression and sin. The manner in which the enemy assumed the form of a serpent in the fell attempt is strikingly recorded, as you will find by referring to the third chapter of the book of Genesis, “Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know, that, in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened; and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she

took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat." Here, you observe, was the entrance—here was the first act of transgression, an event which in its mighty consequences changed the path of nature, and whose mighty consequences also will not only be felt throughout the whole duration of time, but also throughout the duration of eternity.

That in the transgression of our first parents, of which we have now given a brief survey, there was a transgression of vast and heinous amount, is a truth which cannot be too deeply impressed upon our minds. There are some among the false friends or open adversaries of revelation, who have been inclined to treat it with carelessness and levity, and have sometimes inquired—I quote their own language—"What mighty offence could there be in the eating of an apple?" In answer to the ignorant skepticism upon which such an inquiry is founded, and also for the purpose of settling in your own minds those views which ought constantly to be impressed, a few observations must be made.

Let me remind you, then, as we have already stated, and do now repeat, that the particular command of the Deity, with regard to the forbidden fruit, must be viewed as being in connexion with an important general design; and that the regard which was paid by man to that particular commandment was a kind of pledge with respect to all the relations existing between the creature and the Creator, so that as long as the commandment was obeyed, all those relations would be observed, and when it was broken, then all those relations would be violated. Disobedience could not but produce, and disobedience did produce, those emotions and feelings, which in their nature were thoroughly corrupt. There was, for instance, unbelief—there was ambition—there was sensuality—there was ingratitude. *Unbelief*, because they denied the right to command and the penalty that existed—*ambition*, because they aspired to be as gods, distinguishing between good and evil—*sensuality*, because they wished to gratify mere ani-

mal sensual appetite, because they saw that "the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes"—*ingratitude*, because they turned against that mighty God who had sustained them, and who had spread around them every enjoyment for their free and full participation, and to whom they were indebted for life, and happiness, and all these things. My Christian brethren, you can now imagine one peculiar reason for their rejection. Do you not observe that the carelessness and the levity of which we have been speaking, ought, and is to be, condemned and repudiated with horror? The guilt of the first transgression is now palpably apparent before us in all its horrible enormity—a transgression which overthrew and betrayed every existing relationship between the creature and the Creator—a transgression which hurled a foul insult against every attribute of the everlasting God. What, we would ask, what would have been the consequence had vengeance been fully inflicted? What would have been the consequence had the Almighty consigned the transgressors to punishment without one solitary hope of redemption, and beaten down to primeval nothing the whole of the globe which had been thus stained and polluted? But you will observe,

2d. That while the apostle introduces one fact as to the origin of sin, another is also comprised with regard to its *diffusion*, "all have sinned," all men, in every country and in every age of the world.

It is, my hearers, of inexpressible importance that we should admit the important fact involved in the statement of the apostle, and also affirmed by him throughout the whole of the chapter, and in different parts of his writings, that *all* men are sinners—sinners in consequence of the transgression of Adam. The transgression of our first parent did not end with himself—it was not merely personal; it was transferable to his posterity, and was to descend like an heir-loom, entailing misery and corruption, to remain as long as the world should last. "By one man's disobedience"—it is the language of the same writer—"many were made sinners." As it is impossible that an evil tree should

bring forth good fruit, so it was impossible, when the nature of our first parent had become corrupted by those evil dispositions which he acquired in consequence of his transgression, that one of his descendants could enter into the world except as being a partaker of corruption also. Each, then, of the children of Adam enters the world with a polluted nature, or possessing what we term *original sin*.

This important doctrine, you will observe, appears to be indicated in one of the early narratives of Scripture, where Adam is said to have begotten a son "in his own likeness, after his own image," apparently in contrast to the fact stated of himself, that he was formed "after the likeness of God," and notifying the degrading tendency which had been introduced and perpetuated by guilt. The same doctrine has been affirmed constantly in various parts of the sacred writings. If I speak to-night to an individual who denies the fact of original sin existing in human nature, let me remind him of the following statement. There is the inquiry of Job, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." There is the inquiry of Bildad, "How can he be clean that is born of a woman?" There is the confession of David, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." There is the statement of Christ, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." There is the asseveration of the apostle, "The old man is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts." Now, that original sin, which is thus distinctly and solemnly mentioned to us in the inspired writings to be a notorious fact, always produces practical transgression. Hence it is, that the children of the first man, by whom sin entered into the world, alike and all exemplify in themselves unbelief, ambition, sensuality, and ingratitude, with all their vile brood of crimes, and exhibit these as having the uncontrolled empire of the human heart. It is a solemn and affecting consideration, but one which must be thoroughly and distinctly stated, that whatever modification there may be in human character,—whatever modification

may perchance have been formed by learning, by institutions, by education, by example, or any mode of testimony or interest whatever—yet this one fact remains invariably and unalterably the same, that man every where is a sinner. Yes, my brethren, east, west, north, south, from the tropics to the poles, ancient and modern times, scenes of civilization and philosophy, scenes of ignorance and barbarism, all bear but one stamp, the stamp of moral evil,—the stamp of transgression against God. The charges of Scripture upon this important subject are without exception, and without limit: "*All flesh has corrupted his way upon the earth.*" "There is *none* that doeth good, no, not one." "The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre: with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

The statements and quotations which have now been offered, I trust, will be considered as amply satisfactory to verify the application of the text. That you, my hearers, for yourselves, may individually possess a conviction of the fact, and that you may be enabled to make a full application of the fact to your own interests, and to your own circumstances, is what in this service I would earnestly aim at, and what I do most anxiously and most fervently desire. You yourselves, without exception, are the possessors of a corrupted nature. You yourselves have indulged in many a thought, and many a deed, of flagrant transgression against God. You your-

men have spurned alike the Almighty and his law; and while you depart from him you are given up and abandoned to the domination of sin. Think not, my friends, to lull your consciences by making statements with regard to imaginary excellences; form no false excuses. The language of earnest and solemn confession becomes you, "unclean, unclean!" "Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee?" "I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me." "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." "God be merciful to me a sinner." Such is the language that becomes you, and if in spirit you use it not, you are living in the worst state of spiritual captivity, and are passing forward to the consummation of remediless and eternal woe.

As we have now endeavoured to explain to you the origin and diffusion of sin, by the structure of the text we are called to consider—

## II THE ORIGIN AND DIFFUSION OF DEATH.

—"*As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*"

1st. With regard to the *origin of death*, "death by sin."

Man, you are aware, was purposely formed by the Almighty with a susceptibility of being affected by the prospect of reward, and by the fear of punishment. Obedience was connected with the one, and disobedience was connected with the other; and thus the greatest and most powerful of all possible motives was put in action to aspire to that which is good, and to the avoidance of that which is evil. Now, death was an ordained penalty, or a penalty presented to us as the result of transgression. When Adam was placed in the garden of Eden, he was informed that he was not to eat of the tree of forbidden fruit, and it was added, "For in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." And when he stood as a transgressor in the presence of God, whom he had insulted, he was thus addressed, "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten

of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life: thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee: and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground: for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." There was the entrance of death. "The wages of sin is death." What, my friends, is the proper and natural quality so comprehended in the sentence of death announced to, and inflicted upon, Adam, as the result and penalty of his transgression against the law? That *corporeal* death was included, will not for a single moment be denied; that much more was comprehended, on evangelical principles, we are called thoroughly and solemnly to believe. Viewing the phrase, to die, in the light thrown upon the subject by the principles of the gospel, and especially by the evangelical blessings with which the gospel is connected, "justification unto life—eternal life"—it is to be regarded as comprising, and our first parents must therefore be regarded as knowing it to have comprised, all that is comprehended in *spiritual* and eternal death;—that is to say, the debasement of human nature consequent upon its awful alienation from God—the total and absolute withdrawal of the divine friendship and favour—the agitation and gloomy terrors of the conscience at the prospect beyond the grave—the consummation of all this by the entrance of the immortal soul into a state of changeless retribution, where it is to suffer the vengeance of the Almighty without mitigation, unchangeably, and for ever. You can easily imagine what would be the emotion of the transgressors in Eden, when they first awoke from the slumber of intoxication to the full consciousness of the change which had passed upon their being. The voice of thunder yet reverberating its peal, "Thou shalt surely die"—nature, as if shuddering at the sentence, heaving around them—the atmosphere becoming thick, and dull, and heavy, charged with the ele-

ments of disease—their own bodies paralyzed and enfeebled with the infirmity and corruption that was to usher in the awful and mysterious consummation of mortality, and their souls agitated with the prospect of eternal woe, when they contemplated the coming and tremendous infliction of the miseries of hell! Oh, how bitter would be their self-reproaches, how bitter their groans, how bitter their tears! Mournful, mournful indeed, was the day—mournful to them, and mournful to unborn millions, when death entered into the world by sin, and when first was heard the triumph of the king of terrors, as he issued from the dark abyss, and came to the territories of earth, traversing and marching over them, to claim them as his own. It is a tremendous fact, that we should never forget, as to the origin of death, that death was by sin.

2dly. There is a corresponding fact, you will observe also with regard to the *diffusion of death*. "Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

And so it follows in a subsequent verse, "Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation." In Adam all die; all men are sinners, and therefore against all men the penalty is still standing. Corporal death, that event which separates the soul from the body, and which then dismisses the body as the victim of putrefaction, to moulder back to primeval dust, is a penalty which has been exacted and must be exacted from all the sons and daughters of Adam. What man is he that liveth and that shall not see death? "We must all die, and be like water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again." "Rich and poor shall go down to the grave, and worms alike shall cover them." It is appointed unto all men once to die. The *ages* at which the allotment is suffered vary. There is the *child* at the mother's breast, or in the nurse's arms; there is the *youth* in the spring-tide of gayety and buoyant spirits; there

is the *full-grown man* in the maturity of wisdom and of power; there are the *aged* bending under the decrepitude and infirmity of long-protracted years. The *method* in which the allotment is suffered varies. The convulsions of nature; war; famine; accident; disease, slow and sudden. And yet, my brethren, amid the variety of modes, and the variety of seasons, the path is but one and the same. All these things are but so many avenues leading down to the one narrow house, which has been appointed for all living; and never should the subject of death be reviewed by ourselves, and never should the subject of death be pondered by ourselves, without viewing it and pondering it in connexion with sin. Sin, the invariable antecedent; death, the invariable consequence! Sin the cause; death the effect! The demerit of the one producing the desolation of the other! Ye children of mortality, forget it not—approve it and apply it. Sin formed the volcano, the earthquake, the hurricane, the pestilence which mows down the population of cities and empires! Sin inflicts every pang! Sin nerves every death-throe! Sin stains and blanches every corpse! Sin weaves every shroud! Sin shapes every coffin! Sin digs every grave! Sin writes every epitaph! Sin paints every hatchment! Sin sculpts every monument! Sin feeds every worm! The waste and the havoc of centuries that are gone, and the waste and the havoc of centuries yet to come, all reverberate in one awful voice, "Death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned!"

*Spiritual* death, my brethren, which consists, as we have observed, in the alienation of the human heart from God, and which the apostle has emphatically described in the second chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, as being "dead in trespasses and sins," constitutes the state of every man by nature. Every man, in consequence of that state of spiritual death, is also in peril of proceeding to receive the recompense of it in the agonies of death eternal. It will be observed upon this important subject, that there cannot be the least question or doubt: "For (says the apostle) as many

as have sinned without law,"—that is to say, without being placed within the external domination of the written law of the Almighty—"as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law"—that is, with the knowledge of the written revelation of God—"shall be judged by the law. For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another; in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel." My hearers, attend: "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified;" then they must be condemned. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." If then you have come short of the glory of God, you must be lost: it cannot be denied, nor be disputed. I tell to every man now present, that he is guilty of sinning against the Almighty—that if there be no intervention of mercy so mighty and so majestic as to satisfy the demands of justice, to quench her fire, and sheathe her sword—if there be not mercy, free, boundless, omnipotent, and eternal, every human being will stand before the judgment-bar of God to receive the sentence of his condemnation. He must be banished for ever from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; and he must go down to those abodes of torment where there are agonies unspeakable and inconceivable; where the smoke of torment ascendeth up for ever and for ever. Go, my hearers, to the brink of eternity, contemplate in imagination the scenes of that horrible pit which the word of revelation has presented to your view—contemplate the worm that dieth not—contemplate the fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels—contemplate the blackness of darkness—contemplate the smoke of torment that ascendeth up for ever and

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ever! What was it that gave to that worm its fang but sin? What was it that gave to that fire its intensity but sin? What was it that gave to that blackness its shadows but sin? What was it that gave to that torment its woe but sin? The voice is from the abyss uttering one wild cry, "It was sin; *it was sin*; IT WAS SIN! Man *would* sin, and therefore man *must* suffer!" There is a rigid equity between the one and the other. "Death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

We have now, my brethren, presented to you, as clearly as possible, the second division of the subject, and we proceed,

III. TO MENTION THOSE REFLECTIONS BY WHICH OUR VIEWS OF THE COMBINED ORIGIN AND THE DIFFUSION OF SIN AND DEATH MAY BE DULY AND SAVINGLY SANCTIFIED.

We confine ourselves to two:

1st. *It becomes us to perceive and to lament over the exceeding sinfulness of sin.*

Man thinks but lightly of sin; in his state of nature he thinks not of its enormity, and he only calls those actions sins which are palpably violations of the laws subsisting between man and man. Theft is a sin—fornication is a sin—falsehood is a sin—drunkenness is a sin—murder is a sin;—but with regard to the affections—the disbelief of the divine testimony—the forgetfulness of God, the withdrawing of the desires of the heart away from him who is the fountain of living waters to the vain and transitory concerns of time—these, which are the sources of all other transgressions—these he deems but as pardonable, or perhaps not as transgressions. Let me, my hearers, speak plainly to individuals possessed of an immortal spirit—let me remind you that sin is not to be contemplated in its heinousness, so much as it exists and is seen in the relationship between man and man, but in the relationship between man and God. "Sin is the transgression of the law." If God has commanded you to be holy, then impurity is a sin—if God has commanded you to believe, then unbelief is a sin—if God has commanded you to love him with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your strength, then

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to love pleasure, or love the world more than God, is sin; and he who is impure, he who is unbelieving, he who is a lover of pleasure, or of the world, or of profit, is playing with the very fang of the tempter, and standing in the way of that serpent whose breath is poison, and whose bite is death.

Behold, my brethren, the exhibition of the exceeding sinfulness of sin! Oh, ponder, and seek for the influence of the Spirit of God, that its depravity in this respect may be exhibited more clearly than ever; and never be content with your view of that "which brought death into the world and all our woe," but as you view it as *He* views it who is of purer eyes than to look on iniquity, who can only look upon iniquity with detestation and abhorrence, and whose voice has proclaimed, "Oh, do not this abominable thing which I hate!"

2d, and lastly. We are called upon also to *admire the riches of that divine mercy which has provided a remedy against an evil which is so dreadful.*

The very same being against whom the transgressions of the human race have been directed, has himself been pleased to condescend in mercy and in his eternal love to provide a method by which the guilty may be pardoned, and sanctified, and saved. Read the statements contained in the chapter from which we have selected our text. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God and he gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one condemnation; but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which received abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through

righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." What a veil is thus thrown over an otherwise tremendous gloom! What happiness we can now enjoy in believing and receiving this one emphatic phrase!—"But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." It only requires that the guilty sinner should believe on Christ, and he receives the imputation of his righteousness, and is forthwith absolved from doom. Natural death he yet must suffer—the agonies of dissolution he yet must endure—his flesh must still become the food of worms, and lie beneath the cloven clay till the trumpet of the archangel shall sound; but the flesh itself shall rest in hope, and the immortal spirit be emancipated from a scene of suffering and of sorrow by death itself, that it may be transmitted to higher regions, where the inhabitants themselves, pure as God is pure, cast their crowns at his footstool, crying with a loud voice, "Alleluia, alleluia, Lord God Almighty, who is, and was, and is to come!" Where God himself is with them, and is their God,—where death has no dominion, and where God himself wipes away all tears from their eyes! Matchless mercy, that tells us of the reigning of grace! Matchless mercy! its praises shall be the companion of our health—its praises shall be the companion of our sorrows—its praises shall be with us in the hour of dissolution, when the body is about to depart to the dust—its praises will form the one theme of our song amid the hallelujahs of heaven; for what is that song?—Salvation unto God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!

It is obvious, my brethren, that we might easily expand the latter part of our subject; but I am desirous to confine myself this evening to the fall and corruption of human nature, in order to bring more succinctly before you the subject of his renovation. This brief statement, therefore, in allusion to it shall suffice for the present

My brethren, here are many who from the evil of sin, by the grace of God, have already been delivered. *Christians*, look down into the hole of the pit whence ye were digged, and look up to the rock whence ye were hewn. See what ye were, lying there exposed to the curse; and see what you are now, when standing on the elevation of mercy, having around you the spotless robe of the Redeemer's righteousness, the light of the countenance of God streaming down from the glory of the skies. You now have the prelibation of the happiness yet to be revealed. In this sanctuary let there be the confession of that to which you owe it, "By the grace of God I am what I am." At the same time be it your grand desire to join in the one aspiration of thanksgiving, "Thanks be unto God for this his unspeakable gift!"

There are others in this assembly now congregated who are yet "in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." There are sinners, sinners impenitent—sinners unenlightened—sinners alienated from God—sinners unforgiven and in all their danger. O ye, whose consciences are not yet stirred up with feelings of genuine contrition, who are yet following a course of pleasure and transgression which you count the god of your joys and your happiness, let me request your ear. What is your condition? Accursed!—for cursed is every one that continueth not in all things as it is written in the book of the law to do them; and you are under the dispensation of the law; cursed in your basket and in your store; cursed in your goings out and in your comings in; cursed in your sitting down and in your rising up; cursed in the closet and in the field—accursed by the condemnation of God! And what is the end? Look over the territories of the grave! Behold the scene of punishment reserved for them who know not God, and who obey not the gospel of Christ! There will you be, beyond the hope of mercy and of grace. Imagine the agony of dwelling where the tidings of this gospel never shall be heard again. Think of the companionship of the fiends, of the blackness of the pit, of the unmingled horrors—so that even if you could ask for one

drop of water to cool your tormented tongue, even that would be denied! Sinners, I ask you one question before we part, "Who amongst you can dwell with the devouring fire!—who amongst you can dwell with the everlasting burnings?" If there be one, let him rise up and tell us! It is impossible, and your silence condemns you! Flee, then, from the wrath to come! Lay hold on the hope set before you in the gospel! Believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved! The great renovating change must be wrought, or the hell will be yours!

I have brought you to the point where I will deliver but one single sentence by way of connecting what I have advanced this night with what is yet to follow, "Marvel not that I say unto you, ye must be born again—ye *must be born again*." As you are born again, the evil of your transgressions will be removed, and you shall stand in confidence and faith, awaiting the end of your existence—the salvation of your souls.

May the eternal JEHOVAH prepare you, without exception, for the infliction of that temporary death which all must suffer! May he awake you from death in trespasses and sins, and save you finally from that death which is changeless and eternal!—AMEN.

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### THE PULPIT GALLERY.

NO. II.

THE REV. JAMES PARSONS, YORK.

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"By him the violated law speaks out  
Its thunders; and by him, in strains as sweet  
As angels use, the gospel whispers peace."

COWPER.

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THE REV. James Parsons is a son of the late Rev. Edward Parsons, who for forty-eight years was the pastor of Salem Chapel, Leeds, Yorkshire. The son was originally destined for the law, to which profession he was regularly articulated; during the latter part of his term which he spent in London he was a member of the Athenian Society held in the Temple, and was looked upon as a young man of extraordinary talents, and as calculated to rise in his profession. The death

of his mother, however, awoke in his mind a train of serious thoughts. "It was over the tomb of a parent," he says, "and amidst reflections which concentrated on that melancholy spot the recollections of the past, and the anticipations of the future, that led him to think on his destiny." The lessons of childhood, taught by a voice for ever hushed, seemed to rise in accents of louder importunity from the grave, and determined him to relinquish all the brilliant hopes of rising in his profession—all the prospects of legal and literary ambition and wealth, and to dedicate himself to the ministry. This purpose being approved by his father, he entered a theological institution, where he continued until October, 1822, when he took the ministerial oversight of a congregation in the city of York. There he has continued to the present, preaching Christ crucified as the only hope of sinners. He is a yearly visitor to London, having a month or six weeks' supply to give annually to the Tabernacle chapel, built by the celebrated Whitefield. His visits to the metropolis of England have always attracted overwhelming congregations, and there is reason for believing that his labours have been greatly blessed. His biblical knowledge is said to be extensive, and though in the pulpit he seldom descends to criticism, yet he shows by his mode of conducting his discourse, that he is fully acquainted with the subject, and, without pedantry is enabled to draw from the stores of learning both ancient and modern—both sacred and profane—all that tends to illustrate the text from which he is preaching; yet it is done in such a manner that the most illiterate can understand him. His illustrations are luminous, eloquent, and highly scriptural; his appeals to the understanding, the conscience, and the heart, commanding, consecutive, solemn, and on some occasions irresistible. He is aware of the value of climaxes; hence he generally succeeds in fixing the attention, while his *last* illustration, his *last* argument, his *last* appeal, being always the most forcible, remains deeply lodged in the mind of the hearer.

Though Mr. Parsons occasionally wields the terrors of the law, and presents before his hearers a sinner riven with the thunders and scathed by the lightnings of the Almighty's vengeance, his favourite subject is evidently the fulness and freeness of the divine mercy: he appears more anxious to subdue than to terrify; to win by gentleness than to conquer by force; and when he proclaims the willingness of Jehovah to have mercy upon sinners, however numerous and aggravated their crimes, he rises to more than usual eloquence.

That he is not a mere speculator, but an experimentalist in religion, may be seen from the following passage from a sermon delivered by him to the young, in which, while speaking of the vast superiority of the pleasures of religion to those of earth, he says, "Allow me to speak to you, to whom life is in a measure untried, as one who himself can give the testimony. I speak that I do know, and testify that I have seen; and I speak what it is certain others could testify too. I have been in different courses, and have sought for enjoyment in different paths. I have sought it in mirth, and gayety, and amusements; I have sought it in plans and purposes of ambition, and in the imagination of schemes of worldly aggrandizement and honour; I have sought it in the occupations of study, conversing on the page of history with generations that have gone, or mingling in the magic enchantments of poetry, or attempting the more laborious pursuits of intellectual inquiry; and I have sought it in the service of God. And *here* the craving appetite has found its food; and *here* the restless and anxious heart has found its peace and joy! Like the philosopher of old, but in an application far more exalted, I can say, 'I have found it! I have found it!'—in the service of God I am happy; and if I served him more I should be happier still. To be as once I was, I would not for all the gold of every earthly mine, or all the gems of every ocean cave. I come forth in the service of God to proffer the same boon to *you*, that thus we may together rejoice with 'joy unspeakable and full of glory.'"

## SERMON VI.

### *A Farewell Discourse,*

DELIVERED BY THE RT. REV. DANIEL WILSON, A. M.

BISHOP OF CALCUTTA,

TO HIS PARISHIONERS, AT ST. MARY'S, ISLINGTON.

*"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying for the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."—Jude 20, 21.*

THERE is nothing more important than to maintain a consistent, elevated tone of practical piety. This is important, not only because it is that kind of religion that most glorifies God, edifies our neighbour, and brings comfort to our own minds, but because it is the only means of securing ourselves against the seductions of erroneous teachers—of our being preserved amidst the snares and temptations of the world and of Satan—and of introducing us into God's heavenly kingdom. Nor is the difficulty less than the importance of maintaining this high tone of practical religion. Nothing is so difficult as to act up to a holy, wise, scriptural standard of religion. To a Christian, nothing is so difficult as to rise above the habits and feelings generally prevalent in the day in which we live: in fact, like most other valuable attainments, it is difficult in proportion as it is important.

In this view, I have thought that the subject presented to us in the words of my text (which is precisely that which I have intimated), would not be an inappropriate one on the occasion of my taking farewell of my beloved flock and parish.

The apostle is exhorting the primitive converts to contend against the false teachers who had "crept in unawares, and turned the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denied the only God and our

Lord Jesus Christ:" and having described in fearful terms the character and miserable end of such profane abusers of the gospel in the verses preceding the text, we have the prediction of the apostle as to the appearance of such seducers—"But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." And then the apostle introduces his main exhortation in the words which I have read, and in which he appears to me to point out a remedy for all the evils he had been deploring, in an elevated and unvaried tone of spiritual religion centred in the love of God.

This is our subject, in pursuing which we shall follow our apostle,

*First*, in DIRECTING YOUR ATTENTION TO THE MAIN POINT IN WHICH A TRULY ELEVATED AND CONSISTENT PRACTICAL RELIGION CONSISTS—THE LOVE OF GOD: "KEEP YOURSELVES IN THE LOVE OF GOD."

*Secondly*, WE SHALL CONSIDER THE CHIEF MEANS OF ATTAINING THIS MAIN POINT WHICH THE APOSTLE RECOMMENDS—FAITH AND PRAYER: "BUT YE, BELOVED, BUILDING UP YOURSELVES ON YOUR MOST HOLY FAITH, PRAYING IN THE HOLY GHOST."

And this will lead us, in the *last place*,

TO CONSIDER THE INSPIRING ENCOURAGEMENT WHICH HE PRESENTS TO ANIMATE US IN THE PURSUIT TO WHICH HE INVITES US, AND THAT IS ETERNAL LIFE: "LOOKING FOR THE MERCY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST UNTO ETERNAL LIFE."

And now may God be pleased to assist us, that our minds may be calm and collected, that we may be preserved from the great danger of looking for any blessing from the occasion itself, from the excitement of feeling in itself; this, that, or the other circumstance of itself. None of these things, nor all of them, can impart any solid blessing; it is only when we look through them, and above them, to the God and Saviour of all, that we can hope for any blessing from this or any other discourse addressed by a minister of the gospel to such feeble creatures as men.

In considering, then, the importance of maintaining a high and scriptural tone of practical piety, let me, with our apostle, direct your attention,

*First*, TO THE MAIN POINT IN WHICH THAT ELEVATED TONE AND STANDARD OF PRACTICAL PIETY CONSISTS—AND IT IS IN THE ARDENT, UNDECATING LOVE OF GOD IN THE HEART. "BUT YE, BELOVED, KEEP YOURSELVES IN THE LOVE OF GOD." Persevere, guard your hearts from decays in that main affection; keep up a high and genuine flame of holy love to Almighty God continually and unfeignedly, in all its principles and all its affections and consequences, in your souls.

Man was made to love God and to glorify him. Adam in paradise loved God perfectly, and found in that love his happiness and his honour. When man fell, he lost his love to God; and he began to love, with an idolatrous attachment, carnal and sensible objects, external nature, the secular concerns of life, ambition, glory, fame, his family, his children, himself. The sum of the moral law is, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and all thy soul, and all thy strength, and all thy mind;" and when the penitent is brought back to God in true contrition and brokenness of heart, and the mist and confusion hovering over a fallen state are dissipated by the illumina-

tion of the Holy Spirit, he begins to discover that the main point of his apostasy consisted in his having an alienated, estranged, and apostate heart; and by degrees he discerns what claims Almighty God has on his creatures' hearts—what infinite perfections the Almighty possesses, which constitutes the just object of his creature's love—what infinite benefits he has moreover bestowed, which increase those original claims of the divine excellency. He perceives by degrees that he is bound to love God, because God is the best of beings, because he has been to him the most munificent of benefactors. But especially the love of God, in the gift of a Saviour, to die for guilty man, fills the penitent with admiration, and draws forth deep convictions of his guilt, in never having loved this God, who hath so loved the world. In this way he comes back to his God and Father; and in proportion as his mind is rendered peaceable by the application to his conscience of the atoning blood of Christ, and a sense of the forgiveness of his sins—in proportion as there is established something like a tranquil state of mind by the operations and influence of redeeming grace, so the man begins to love God, and in this begins the sum and substance of his religion. He who loved every thing but God, now loves God above every thing, and every thing in subordination to God. "God is love," is now the doctrine, and sum, and substance of the penitent's language—"God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

This now becomes the object of his pursuit, his continual aim, the point to which his vigilance is directed, the topic of his vigilant thoughts and meditations. He aims to have such a sense of God's love to him, as may bind his soul to God in return; leading him to serve him, to desire to please him, to delight in him as the source of felicity, to find all his happiness in him, to walk under a sense of his favour, to enjoy the light of his countenance, to rejoice and solace himself in God as his exceeding joy. He desires, so far as he can fulfil his purpose of mind, to feel no pleasure but in communion with God, in the conviction of his presence

entering his soul, in the society of his holy people, and in every expression that becomes him as being under infinite obligations to divine love. With these views he seeks to render a moral obedience to the ten commandments, the fulfilment of every relative duty, and the conscientious discharge of all his various obligations. Every thing, in short, that pleases God is a part and parcel of the love of God. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."

Again; The avoidance of all that displeases God, the mortification of inward and outward sense, the separation from the world which extinguishes the love of God, so that "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him"—separation, I say, from the world, in its amusements, vanities, companions, maxims, spirit—separation, I repeat it the third time, from the world, the love of which constitutes of itself enmity to God—all this is included in the love of God. This, in fact, as you have heard me declare, brethren, from my lips I trust a hundred and a hundred times, is the sum of all religion. That which was the sum of natural religion before man fell, was the love of God; that which constitutes heaven is the love of God, and the whole of the gospel, as I shall presently have occasion to show, is a remedial dispensation to bring us back to that which we lost, the love of God. This prepares us for that which nothing but the blood of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit can prepare us for—the perfect love of God in heaven.

Again; The elevated tone of a scriptural piety centres here, that you *keep yourselves*—"keep yourselves, beloved, in the love of God." Guard against those declines which are perpetually coming on; watch, lest the flame languish and expire; guard it with a holy jealousy, as the priests did the fire on the altar of old. Here is the great secret of maintaining a scriptural, consistent, evangelical piety in the heart and conduct. Our religion is as our hearts are. If we really love God above all things, and walk in his love,

every thing else will go on right: but if love decline, if the heart be open to every evil, if the understanding be ungarrisoned, as it were, and the love of God be absent from the heart and affections, then the first seducer finds it an easy prey; and then, if those arise that creep in unawares and turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness on the one hand, or deny our only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ on the other, the heart has but little guard—it has but little from the education of early instruction, and the remains of conscience. What an amazing blessing is a national church! It upholds all the doctrines of the gospel, and all the framework of Christianity, and does not leave us to the moving sands of human passions. It is well if the man be kept in the way at all, by the sacraments and by the means of grace; but without the love of God he has no inward guard. You will ever find that those who go away into any of the superstitious novelties, corruptions, follies, and extravagances of any particular day, are those in whom the love of God is declining in the heart; and be it remembered, that our own day is not different from others, and that what we observe is merely the last edition of Satan's follies; for they have been continually published. From the very first moment that the authentic book of God came out into the world, Satan's surreptitious editions have been ever attempting to palm themselves upon the church.

Then it is in this way, brethren, that we are to keep ourselves: "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Let nothing else satisfy you; never let the world draw you off from this high ground; labour to rise higher and higher in the scriptural love of God, in this principle, in its proper effects, in all its experience, till it comes down to the ten commandments, and has its fruit in holy lives, righteous conduct upright demeanour, and a loving, gracious temper—temper and spirit formed by the love of God. There are many, beloved that go some length in religion, but do not come up to this point, nor do they aim at it. There are, it is to be feared, too many that are content with the common run of religious feeling and evangelical practice, but

never think of rising up to the real standard of Scripture in the prevailing, supreme love of God in the heart. "Keep yourselves therefore, beloved, in the love of God." It is, indeed, God alone who can keep the feet of his saints. The Christians are described in the beginning of the epistles as "the preserved in Christ Jesus." It is God only that is able to keep us from falling, and we are kept by his power through faith unto salvation. But still we are to *keep ourselves*. That is the way that Scripture puts things. We are to be diligent in the use of all the appointed means, to be active as reasonable and accountable creatures. "He that is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." "As the Father hath loved me," says the Saviour, "so have I loved you: continue ye in my love"—that is, keep yourselves—"continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."

Now, brethren, how far have we acted on this great principle during the course of the ministry which is now terminating in this particular part of our Lord's vineyard? How far have I succeeded, and my brother ministers, in our public and private instructions, in bringing you up to this point, of receiving and understanding in what essential religion consists? I apprehend, take the world in general, they know not what the love of God means; nor what it is to have the heart filled with it; nor what is the standard Scripture proposes. They satisfy themselves with some mere carnal expression of admiration of God's goodness—God the moral governor and God the judge; but as to any distinct and practical idea of the love of God in the operations of his grace upon the heart; the holy flame of contemplation of his divine excellences—the memory of his mercies—the labour to keep the heart by prayer, by meditation, by secret devotion, by the study of the Scriptures, as well as by the sacraments and the means of grace, they are totally ignorant of it. Why, there are many before us, I cannot but fear, if they will honestly

examine their hearts, will find themselves in this state. Young people, I ask you, have you ever thought in your lives, seriously and practically, of proposing this main point as the end of your religion? My prayer this morning is, to gain every heart that is within the hearing of this voice, to the love of God; and if there be any present destitute of it, however opposed, however they may resist, however prejudiced, however ignorant, here is the object I have in view this morning, to put them in the way of discerning what is the main scope of practical religion, and then of beginning to seek it. And I have another design, which is, that all of us who have any measure of this sacred affection may have it kindled to a brighter flame; that we may be humbled in the dust under the petty measure of our habitual love to God; that we may be preparing and seeking more and more to know ourselves. From henceforth to your dying hour "keep yourselves in the love of God."

But you will naturally ask, What are the appointed means?—what are the chief methods by which, in a world of sin like ours, we can pursue this high attainment?

This is our *Second* point. THE CHIEF MEANS OF ATTAINING THIS HIGH AND LOFTY STANDARD OF PRACTICAL PIETY, and these are *faith* and *prayer*—faith, as to the particular doctrines of revelation on which the gospel rests—prayer, as to the strength and consolation of the Spirit which the gospel promises. "Building up yourselves in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost."

Religion in the heart of man is here compared to a building, the foundation of which is faith in Christ. That is the foundation of heavenly truth which faith embraces and builds upon as the foundation of that spiritual edifice laid in the human heart by regenerating and sanctifying grace. This faith is not a mere assent, a mere historical notion, a mere agreement with a national creed, a mere not opposing certain practical truths, but it is a spiritual, holy affection, wrought in the heart by the blessed Spirit. "He that hath received his testimony hath set

to his seal that God is true." "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves:"—the faith is not of ourselves—"it is the gift of God." Unto you it is given on behalf of Christ to believe on him. The doctrine thus received by an obedient faith is laid straightway as the foundation of the divine building in the soul. The whole revelation made by Almighty God to man in his word is that which faith embraces, seizing, grasping, and then applying to its proper purpose. There is the foundation of the spiritual building.

But this faith more especially relates to two great points of revealed religion—the fall and the recovery of man. What is your Bible? It contains the fall and the recovery of man. What is the gospel? It contains the fall and the recovery of man. What are the great means by which all the operations of God and the designs of benevolence are to be accomplished? By the knowledge of the fall and the recovery of man.

*Natural* religion is the love of God. I mean by natural religion, not the religion that man can practice in a fallen state, but that which was adapted to man before the fall, and results from the primary quality of his nature—that essential relation between such a creature as man, and such a glorious being as God in every possible circumstance in which their relation may vary. That is an intelligible meaning; Bishop Butler and all the greatest writers use the expression, "*natural religion*," in that sense. Then *revealed* religion is all the system, which I am now going to mention, of revealed truth, all the particular scheme of redemption, which is the remedy for bringing man back from the fallen state into which he had lapsed, and for raising him again partially in this world, and completely in another, to the love of God for which he was formed, and without which he can neither be happy here nor hereafter.

Man is ruined by sin; the wrath of Almighty God in which he lies by nature; the evil nature of sin as committed against

God; that corruption and alienation of the heart which is enmity against the scriptural character and government of God; the false estimate of virtue and religion prevalent in the world; the vain and insufficient sparks and spangles, as it were, of piety, of which the world glories and boasts, all this revelation lays open and makes known as the disease. It comes as a faithful physician, and instead of skinning over the wound as the empiric would do, and as all false religions do, Christianity probes the corrupt sore, opens it to the very bottom, deepens it, and puts the patient to increased pain for the moment; but it is in order to pour in the heavenly balm, to begin an effectual and a permanent cure, to raise to health, to vigour, to peace, to joy, to soundness in future life. The doctrine of the fall may, indeed, be overstated, and so may every thing else. It may be so put, in the heat of controversy, as to appear to deny man's responsibility—the faint remains of moral feeling which he possesses—the duty of exciting him and urging him to act as an accountable being—the capacities of restoration which still hang about him; but in its genuine scriptural tenor, as laid down in the Holy Bible, and as laid down also in the article of our own church upon original or birth sin, it is essential to the entrance of all truth. Till this is learned, nothing is learned; but the moment the penitent sinner begins to discover his state by nature as a transgressor, not merely against his fellow-creatures, not merely from the miserable consequences of sin, not merely because he feels the lapse of rectitude, and the disappointment of hope, but because he has sinned against God, because his heart is apostate and in rebellion against his Maker, and his Redeemer, and his Lord, that moment the man is prepared for the gospel. Tell him of the name of Jesus, hold up the light of the gospel to his now darkened and benighted soul—because the vain, flowery vision, and the magical arts of Satan, have been now extinguished—and the man feels the darkness in which he is groping; tell him now, that the Son of God came down from heaven to "reconcile the world unto



himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" tell him that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life;" proclaim to him pardon and free gratuitous acceptance and adoption into the family of God by the imputation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ received by faith, and in proportion as that faith in the penitent's mind is strengthened, which commonly takes a considerable period, (every thing lasts best which goes on slowly and surely—fits and starts do little good in any thing, and least of all in religion,) in proportion, I say, therefore, as the penitent becomes a little strengthened, the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, the glory of his person, the infinite love of his death, the salvation by grace through faith in his atoning blood, will be the appropriate medicine of the broken heart, so will he cherish love to God. The doctrine of the fall and the doctrine of the recovery of man in the redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the operation of the Holy Ghost, answer to each other as the impression answers to the seal, line by line, and feature by feature. The corresponding parts of revelation, all that regards the fall of man, and then all that regards his recovery, respond to each other line by line, feature by feature, even as the impression answers to the signal by which it is made, and you will easily assume, that upon this foundation the man begins to build well. When this foundation is well laid, and you must dig deep to lay it, superficial convictions, and slight sandy foundations will not do when the storm comes; but the foundation being well laid by the instruction of ministers, the help of the primary teacher the Holy Ghost, much prayer, the sacraments, and all the means of grace, the man begins to build up himself in love, in meekness, in lowliness of heart, in knowledge, in joy, in peace. Here the building begins to rise, and here he goes on building up himself all his life by this means upon his "most holy faith." While others are building up their houses, raising their mansions, beautifying their outward structures; the character of the sincere Chris-

tian is, that he is building up himself on his "most holy faith."

Mark! "most holy faith;" for there is no part of this faith that does not savour of holiness. A man must strangely pervert the whole before he can turn it to lasciviousness, wantonness, and a worldly life. 'The most awful case in the whole world, when it is done, is uniting an evangelical creed with a worldly heart and an ungodly life. Awful is the unnatural commixture. It is turning our "most holy faith" into the gall, and poison, and wormwood of the unrenewed heart, and in this way the love of God goes out in the soul. You may easily see how the means contribute to the end. Here is the temple that is to be built, and here is the scaffolding, and it is only through the medium of such means that you can build up yourselves in your "most holy faith." All attempts to bring men to love God by mere declamation, by philosophic subtleties, by dwelling upon some parts of the divine character,—as you read that some of the German writers did by dwelling merely upon the amiableness, the benevolence, and the goodness of the Deity,—without any distinct respect to redemption, are futile and ineffectual. Such was the error into which the mystics, Fénélon, for instance, and other contemporaneous writers, in a great measure, fell. They looked to the end, but did not consider the means—the atonement—the redemption—the propitiation of the Son of God, all the great work which he wrought on the cross, and which is the centre of revealed religion, the centre of essential and primary religion. And when men set themselves to work on this footing of their own power, own duties, own performances, preparing themselves for faith, seeking the love of God, it is worse than the Egyptian bondage, in which the Egyptians compelled the Hebrew captives to make the bricks without straw and necessary means. It is all the mere pageantry and sophism of Satan if the gospel be left out. If this be not made the prominent, the chief means of our ever coming to the love of God, our building up ourselves, there is no building up ourselves on our "most holy faith" in Christ Jesus.

But this is not the only means. We must not think we can do these things by faith merely as an act of our own, or without God's assistance. We must not think that any system, however correct, can lead to our keeping ourselves in the love of God. No; we must remember, that unless we pray much for the Holy Ghost, all is dead in our religion. Not all the grace of Christ—not all the wonders of Bethlehem—not all the unutterable agonies of Gethsemane—not all the mysterious death of the cross can save the soul without the Holy Spirit. "Praying in the Holy Ghost" is as necessary in order to keep the heart in God's love, or to bring it there, or to recover it if it be at all declining, which it frequently, I was going to say almost always is, more or less in our hearts: "Praying in the Holy Ghost" is as essential as building up ourselves in our "most holy faith." For, beloved, remember prayer is the breath of the soul—prayer is the link between miserable man and his merciful Creator—prayer is the channel by which all our desires are conveyed, and flow upwards as it were to God, and all his benefits and blessings are conveyed, and flow downwards to us, and therefore it is that we must pray much in the Holy Ghost. Formal prayers will do no good. "This people draw near to me with their lips and with their mouths." They show me much love, but their heart is gone after their covetousness. Dear brethren, we cannot pray with fervour, with simplicity, with humility, with perseverance, without the Holy Ghost; in fact, such is our weakness, that we can but just pray aright with the Holy Ghost. What are we without the Holy Ghost? We are without love—without meaning in our prayers—without humility—without fervour—without importunity—without spirituality. It is a carcass dead, and even offensive, without the inspiring Spirit that makes life, and gives health and animation, and efficacy to all the parts of our Christian frame. It is when, as the apostle says, "we pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit"—it is when "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as

we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered," that we pray with the heart. Then the love of God grows apace—then declines are presently remedied—then we keep ourselves in the love of God—then errors and novelties, and those who would turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, and all these things lose their seductive charms. There is no room for them in the heart, because it is full of the love of God, and the man's hands are full of building up himself in his "most holy faith," and he is "praying in the Holy Ghost," and he has more than enough to do. It is those that stand idle in the market-place whom Satan masters, and renders the objects of a dangerous, novel, and corrupt influence in the church; and, therefore, it is in the use of these means that you are preserved. You have the whole structure of religion—you have all the doctrinal duties—you have all the means of grace—you have all the sacraments—you have all the various methods which Almighty God has appointed for diffusing the blessings of Christianity, faith and prayer, doctrine and devotion, preaching and adoration—these are the means by which the love of God is preserved in the heart.

And now, dear brethren, upon this branch of our subject, are you as cordially agreeing with me, and as deeply convinced how dependent we are upon the means as you are persuaded of the magnitude, and loftiness, and pre-eminence of that in which the sum and substance of religion itself consists? No man ever yet felt the value of the love of God that did not cling pretty closely to the means by which it is to be brought into, and kept alive in, the heart. And this is the real foundation of a consistent ardour in the church—of that devotional habit in our own heart which it so pre-eminently tends to nourish—of the fruitful Christian being content with his own minister, his own place, or church, and the means of grace offered to him by the God of Providence, knowing that in this way he is far more likely to prosper than by being like the wandering stars, now here, now there, first under one and then under another in-

structor; and thus all the sap and life of religion is evaporated, and a dangerous excitement is very often substituted for the real scriptural, sober piety of the gospel.

And therefore you should pray, beloved, that the doctrines of faith and of the Holy Ghost in this church, and wherever God's word is preached, may be maintained; for undoubtedly it is essential to the efficacy of all the other means of grace that there should be the preaching of the word, because God has appointed it as the living organ, the life-stirring trumpet that is to blow up and to convoke the assemblies of the Lord; and because all other means will too frequently sink into the mere *opus operatum*, a mere formality, if there be not the living minister to quicken—to arouse—to awaken—to stir up the hearts of men—to call the ungodly to the Saviour, whatever he may have to endure in rousing the attention of a careless world, and in reviving, as far as he can, the tone of sober, scriptural, spiritual, evangelical religion. And it is a singular comfort to my own mind to know, that in the years that have passed, there has been a rapid rise throughout our beloved national church of this genuine spirit of godliness and piety, of evangelical doctrine and faithful administration of the sacraments in and throughout her clergy. I feel, as to my own honoured parish, the most complete satisfaction of mind in the ministers who have been appointed, and who will continue to labour among you. There wants only the mutual prayer, "praying in the Holy Ghost," in order that your doctrine and faith may be kept pure and enlightened, that the love of God may be the great object to which they are directing your endeavours, and an elevated tone of religion the blessed result.

But you will say, with such a system of means to be employed, and so great a point as the main object of religion, is there any inspiring and adequate encouragement to cheer us up under the whole? What is the inspiring hope? What is the comfort?—for we have divers afflictions to meet with in life—our faith has many fiery trials to pass through—we have much to endure from a world lying in wickedness, and which has a corres-

pondence with the traitorous passions in our own hearts. Satan has the advantage in his work, for he knows there is a traitor in the garrison—our remaining corruption. There is an affinity between Satan's temptations, the world's seductions, all kinds of errors, and the remaining disorders and corruptions in our understanding, affection, will, and conscience, and therefore we have all these to battle against. It is not plain sailing; it is not a mere thing that may be learned easily. Brethren, there is no getting to heaven in an easy manner; at least, I never found it out. My Saviour teaches me, that "strait is the gate," and then when we get in, "narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." As soon as you enter the way, Satan sets out, the spiritual adversary; and he stands across the path, as it were, to resist you, so that it is natural to ask,

*Thirdly, WHAT ENCOURAGEMENT IS THERE? WHAT IS THERE TO CHEER THE HEART AND TO FORM A COMPENSATING MOTIVE FOR ALL THIS EFFORT? THERE IS MUCH, AND IT IS NO LESS THAN ETERNAL LIFE, "LOOKING FOR THE MERCY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST UNTO ETERNAL LIFE."*

The endless fruition of God, the presence of that God which constitutes life in itself, which is eternal life, is our encouragement. The life we now live is a kind of death-like life. It is a doubtful life; it is a flickering flame, as it were, which sometimes seems to almost expire, and then it seems to start up again into brightness. This life is a brief life; it is an uncertain life; it is a mingled life, a great part of it lies in the valley of humiliation and in the shadow of darkness. But that life deserves the name—it is that life which consists in the perfect knowledge, love, and fruition of God—that life which is never to end, never to abate in intensity of enjoyment. Conceive of that idea, never to abate in intensity of enjoyment, but always to go on augmenting and augmenting in larger measures of the vision, knowledge, love, and communion of God. For though I apprehend perfection as to the measure of our capacity will be vouchsafed even immediately after death, and when the resurrection restores these mor-

tal bodies and kindred spirits, yet I conceive, also, there will be a continual progress in the capacities of enjoyment, an augmentation in all the means and inlets of knowledge, the visions of love, the extacies of joy, increased communion with God throughout eternity. I conceive that Satan, from the moment of his fall, has been augmenting in his satanic capacities, in his deteriorations, alienations, distances, and so on; and I apprehend every saint will be in the opposite state, ever increasing and augmenting in that eternal life upon which he will enter.

This eternal life, beloved, is the natural close of the love of God in which we keep ourselves upon earth. It is nothing more, in fact, than that love developed; it is nothing more than the sweet and fragrant bud fully brought out to its bloom. We are to eternity what we make ourselves in time, taking the expression "make ourselves" with its proper limit, and remembering always the grace and sovereignty of God. Time is the seed-plot for eternity. The love of God now needs only to have its surrounding impediments removed, and its inward principle deepened, and there is eternal life, the presence of God flowing in upon it; and this blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ unto eternal life, is just the encouragement we want. This world is not to last for ever. These changes and separations are not to be repeated without intermission; it is only for a short time, and then we shall all be swallowed up, "That mortality might be swallowed up of life." "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." We must look from the storm when it beats, from the creatures when they disappoint us, which they constantly do; it is meant they should, they are not capable of doing any thing else; and it is only just in setting lightly by them, and just letting them lightly into the heart, and keeping the heart in the love of God supremely, that we have the real enjoyment of the creature.

And then it is in this way that we are kept and go on looking for this mercy. Give me relief at last, give me peace at

last, give me the prospect of the object accomplished, and then the soul reposes itself and solaces itself in God. That is the principle, I apprehend, upon which God has constituted the human mind. We are capable of great exertion if we have but an adequate prospect. That is the stimulus upon which we are continually acting. All our pursuits, all our schemes, all our mercantile speculations, all our maritime discoveries, all our efforts to advance science, all the nights and days spent by philosophers in the examination of the physical sciences and arts, what is the stimulus to these varied occupations? Every party is animated by the pleasures of discovery and by the hopes of success. How much more when these principles of our nature are sanctified by that which contains all philosophy and all science, and every thing that man has ever devised, and are animated by the brightest prospects beyond the grave! It is in this way we are sustained, "by hope we are saved," by hope we go on. The separations, and griefs, and unmanly and excessive sorrows, which depress the worldly heart, that sees all dark, of course, beyond present enjoyment, are not removed from the Christian, but alleviated, rendered tolerable by the mighty power of those Christian principles, which, when they enter the heart, rule there, are not subject, and subordinate, and petty servants in the heart, but are sovereign there, and rule supreme.

But mark, it is "the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ." Mercy, that is what we first pray for—mercy; the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who died upon the cross—that is the blessing we next pray for. The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave his Holy Spirit to sanctify the church, that is the next blessing we pray for. The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ in all the subsequent events of life, the trials of life, the sorrows of life, the pressure of declining age, the torrent of trouble that every now and then bursts across our way, overflows all the banks, and inundates as it were the soul—then it is the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ of which we stand in need. And in this frame we come up to heaven's gates. You must

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come up to the gates of heaven a contrite sinner, or you never can look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. The very last step taken in this world must be that of joy and consolation, occasionally indeed of lively hope, but of contrition and penitence for sin, or else you cannot come into the condition in which alone you can enter heaven, looking for "the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Let those look to merits who can find any on which to rest; let those look to their own works who think they have enough to build upon; let those look to their own sufferings and sorrows who have got any to show; but let us, knowing our unworthiness, and the miserable character of all our best services, let us look to the "mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." The mercy, the act of mercy—probably the apostle may refer to that act of mercy which is the last we shall want, when at the bar of Christ, standing with an assembled world, nothing but the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ can adjudge us eternal life. It is therefore, I apprehend, to the merciful sentence, the last act, the great conclusion of the whole scene of our duty, to which we are here looking, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

I pause here to direct your attention to the divinity of Christ implied in this language. What am I to do? To look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then is he no better than myself? Is he only a man? To entertain such sentiments is blasphemy; but I trust it is only in the most intense ignorance that they have been formed. No, brethren; if I am to look to him in all my struggles and emergencies, if I am to say with Stephen in the article of death, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" if with St. Paul I am to pray to my Redeemer that the thorn may be taken out of my flesh—(thrice did the apostle pray that it might be taken from him, and he gloried in his infirmities that the power of Christ might rest upon him)—if in heaven I am to sing that blessed song, "worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honour and glory, and

blessing," then that Saviour is as the apostle tells us he is, "the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;" or as the apostle says in this very epistle, "denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ;" or as the apostle says in another place, "Jesus Christ who is God over all blessed for ever." Dear brethren, the doctrine of our Lord's divinity with that of the personality and Deity of the Holy Ghost, (who is described in Scripture as coming, as guiding, as sending, as being grieved, as consoling, which are as much personal acts as any of our Redeemer's acts were personal,) is as clearly revealed as is the existence of God. And then, in the text, we are commanded to "pray in the Holy Ghost;" and he that prays in the Holy Ghost, acknowledges by his language the divinity of the Holy Ghost. Then you have in the doctrine of this day's solemnity the blessed and adorable Trinity—the Three-One, the Trinity of the Godhead in the mystery of the divine glory, which I know not how to explain, and which I would not attempt to explain, and which the Bible does not require me to explain, because it tells me, "great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." But all the objections I ever had the misfortune to hear against the doctrine of the Trinity were mis-statements of facts, mis-apprehensions of arguments, and a plain denial of the common language and obvious meaning of the Holy Ghost; and by these artifices I could prove any thing, set aside any act of parliament, change any one of the ten commandments, and make the whole Bible out a nullity. The common-sense interpretation of the Bible is involved in the faith which believes that God speaks to man in the language of man, that by man it may be received.

But to return. It is in this temper that we are to "look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life;" and it is in this way that we have abundant encouragement to inspire our languid hearts, and such is the elevated tone of religion to which, with the apostle, I would venture to exhort you. Such is our privilege, such the sum and substance of our duty, to walk in the love of God, to keep in

that holy blessed frame, to grow in the love of our God and Saviour. Such are the means placed before us for the attainment of this great object, namely, faith apprehending all the works of God in Christ Jesus, and prayer poured out before him by the power of the Holy Ghost. And such is the encouragement to cheer the drooping heart, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." The whole hangs together, and there is a correspondence in the magnitude of the end, and in the magnitude and fitness of the means; and there is a correspondence in the brightness of the encouragement. No man can read the text, and understand it, without saying, "these are the words of eternal life—no mortal pen ever dictated such a sentiment."

And now, brethren, let me *First* exhort all of you *not to be satisfied with any thing below this in your future course of life.* Aim, I pray you, beloved, at further progress in this divine and heavenly religion. Examine yourselves. Is this my religion? If it be, am I growing in it? am I advancing in it? am I going forward in it? am I more and more increasing in love to God? If I have fallen into decay, am I coming back? Perhaps half the Christian brethren that hear me may feel the note, when it is touched, vibrate in their own hearts. Beloved, if you have in any measure fallen from God, or in any measure declined, will you come back, will you begin again to build up yourselves in your "most holy faith," to pray in the Holy Ghost, and keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life? He that is satisfied in a low and doubtful state of Christianity, has no Christianity at all. There is no such thing; there is no religion that is not a growing religion, a vivacious, augmenting, increasing religion. There may be a sickening religion, but it does not deserve the name; until it attains something of health we can express no hope, and we dare not poison you by flattery.

Let, therefore, this be the first improvement that I will venture to leave on my own heart; and let, my beloved friends, let nothing short of this standard satisfy you.

Aim high. He that darts his arrow towards the heavens, will reach a greater height than he that turns it on earth. Let, at least, our standard be high; let our aim be high; let the law of God in all its amplitude be the object of our pursuit, the means of grace, the diligent instruments we employ, and the looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, our strong encouragement.

*Secondly*, let all be convinced that *this is the only religion that can save the soul.* Now this includes the conduct of all those whom I have now the pleasure, though a painful one, yet the pleasure to address, on this occasion. Let the *highest* not be satisfied with less attainments; let the *lowest* not despond at the first beginnings; let *all* be convinced that there is no other religion. There is no other bridge thrown over the bottomless abyss of the world's misery but Jesus Christ, and him crucified: there is one religion, and *but one.* *Sceptic*, you will find at last that your vain reasonings are the mere *ignis fatuus* of a corrupt understanding. You will find, believe me, that a penitent's heart, that one tear dropped over your Bible for your sins, is worth all the metaphysics and all the speculations by which the head is lifted up and inflated, and the heart hardened. *Worldly professor*, there is no other religion will do. You cannot have the world and God at once; you cannot have the love of the world and the love of God in the same heart at the same time. It is contrary to the nature of things; as much so as it is in physical science for two bodies to fill the same space at the same moment. *Vain professors of evangelical truth*, who form a large class at the present day, and will be larger, it is Satan's art when the gospel is widely preached and spread, to induce us to rely upon national approbation, to hang upon that doctrine, to make religion consist of this and that charity this and that feeling, this and that circumstance; to build up yourselves because we belong to this or that society, or are doing this or that good thing. O, my brethren, this is not the love of God; and it is nothing but that which will prepare you for heaven, and nothing but faith in

a crucified Saviour that can ever build you up in your "most holy faith!"

Therefore, earnestly let me commend all that have not yet ascertained this great point, to take the friendly admonition, the last accents of one who desires to discharge his last duty, not merely by affection and the most sincere wishes, but in honest endeavours to save every soul he can ere he embarks, as it were, for another world. And therefore I must come to thy conscience, sinner, wherever thou art. I cannot find thee out, but God has thee under the glare of his eye at this moment! Thou art quivering in thy seat at this instant, though I know thee not! Take the friendly warning, and escape! Flee, I pray thee, from the wrath to come! Flee to the Saviour ere it be too late! Begin real religion! Renounce thy wine, thy harlots, thy lusts, thy pleasure, thy merely human science, thy poetry, thy philosophy, thy every thing that stands in the way to heaven: and when you have received the love of God you will use only what is lawful in any thing. O, remember it is not what I say—sayeth not God the same? Is not God love? If an earthly parent require the love of his child—if the love of a friend be the only essential quality of friendship—if a benefactor look for gratitude, I appeal to your common sense, I appeal to the tribunal of conscience—if it be not hardened by profligacy and habits of vice, which desolate conscience, and leave it like seared and callous flesh—if there be a conscience, if there be any thing of moral feeling in the sinner, shall not the God that made thee have thy supreme love? Shall not the Redeemer that died for thee claim and possess thy affection? Shall not the sanctifying Spirit see thee praying for his grace? Shall not the love of God be paid to thy heavenly Father, thy heavenly friend, thy divine benefactor? Yes! O, may the angels of Christ take up the tidings to his throne that every sinner here is beginning to repent! Yes; I pause while the desire is formed in the breast of every sinner. Let each one put up to the throne of mercy this ejaculation, "Lord, give me thy grace, and may I begin this heartfelt religion!" I pause that

you may make the prayer in your own breasts. O, my God! is there one that has not made the prayer? Is there a heart so hard that it has not seized the moment to aspire after grace and salvation? No; I so trust thy mercy, that I cannot think there is one from the youngest to the oldest that hath not addressed a prayer for the love of God; and in that persuasion, beloved, I bid you *farewell*. It was said by a great master of history, (I don't know whether these are his words, but they contain his sentiments,) *Parvi affectus loquuntur, magni tacent*. Little griefs speak, great ones are silent.

I say, therefore, in bidding you farewell, I return you my most heartfelt acknowledgments for all the kindness and attention, and more than ministerial affection, which you have rendered to me. I also desire to beg your forgiveness, each of you individually, if you be present, (or if not, I desire it may be reported to every parishioner,) of any unintentional errors, offences, mistakes which I must I know have committed. I would likewise solemnly return my thanks, most of all, to Almighty God for his mercies to me. And "*Now*," brethren, "*unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.*" Amen.

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#### THE PULPIT GALLERY.

NO. III.

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THE (LATE) REV. JOHN FLETCHER,  
Vicar of Madeley.

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J. W. DE LA FLECHERE was born at Nyon, in Switzerland, on the 12th of September, 1729. In March, 1757, he entered the ministry of the Episcopal church, and with an uncommon degree of pastoral fidelity, and ardent piety, amidst much weakness of body, discharged with almost apostolic zeal and earnestness the varied duties of his office, until August, 1785, when he expired in the triumphs of faith.

It has been recorded of him, that when vicar of Madeley, as often as a small congregation could be collected, which was usually every evening, he preached to them. He visited every family in his parish that gave him access, for conversation and prayer; and no hour of the night, nor severity of the weather, precluded his attendance on the sick. He interrupted the nocturnal revellings, then common among his young parishioners, by his solemn but affectionate admonitions; and braved the fury of the colliers, amidst their savage orgies and inhuman sports. At Coal-brook Dale and Madeley-wood, two hamlets in his parish, distant from the church, he preached alternately; and erected, chiefly at his own expense, two buildings for more convenient worship. At his church he preached twice every Sunday, besides catechizing children; and often repeated his services, in the evening, at places considerably distant. In his efforts to do good he manifested a zeal and perseverance rarely seen, and was frequently rewarded with a success as striking, as the means employed to obtain it. A poor collier, now living at Madeley, and upwards of eighty years of age, relates, that in the former part of his life he was exceedingly profligate, and that Mr. Fletcher frequently sought opportunities to warn him of his danger. "For," added the poor man, "he used always to run after such wicked fellows as I was, whenever he saw us, in order that he might talk with us, and warn us." Being aware of his pious vicar's intentions, this collier was accustomed, as soon

as he saw him, to run home with all speed, and close the door before Mr. Fletcher could reach it: and thus, for many months together, he escaped his deserved reproofs. The holy man, however, still persevering in his attempts, on one occasion outran this determined sinner, and obtained possession of his house before him. The poor man, awed by the presence of his minister, and softened by the persuasive kindness of his manners, was greatly affected, and received those religious impressions which soon ended in a thorough change of his character.

Another of his parishioners, who is still living, relates the following characteristic circumstance:—When a young man, he was married by Mr. Fletcher, who said to him as soon as the service was concluded, and he was about to make the accustomed entry, "Well, William, you have had your name entered in our register once before this." "Yes, sir, at my baptism." "And now, your name will be entered a second time. You have no doubt thought much about your present step, and made proper preparations for it in many different ways." "Yes, sir." "Recollect that a third entry of your name,—the register of your burial, will, sooner or later, take place. Think, then, about death, and make preparations for that also, lest it overtake you as a thief in the night." This person also is now walking in the ways of the Lord, and states, that he often adverts to this and other things which his serious and affectionate pastor found frequent occasion to say to him.



## SERMON VII.

MOTIVES IN MISSIONARY OBJECTS ESSENTIAL TO SUCCESS.

BY THE REV. R. W. HAMILTON.

*"Let not, then, your good be evil spoken of."—Rom. xiv. 16.*

THE question of Christian missions occupies, my beloved hearers, a very different position in the public mind in our current history from that which it formerly obtained. Statesmen do not necessarily, as at the first, denounce it; philosophers do not necessarily denounce it; travellers do not necessarily deprecate it. It does not, as of old, invariably provoke mercantile clamour and political alarm. Contempt has become more calm, and calumny has learned to impose a restraint upon itself. The old outcry is spent; the fierce onset has obeyed the sound of retreat; "the stout-hearted are spoiled; and none of the men of might have found their hands." Insinuation still secretes its subtle poison, and crawls its reptile course; but the invective and menace which once filled our legislatures, our tribunals, our schools, our marts—which were heard in high debate, and were reverberated by popular tumult—which gave a tone to polite letters, and an expression to outrageous vulgarities—these, with a few exceptions, which stand related to a system whose moderation can never be more than affected, and whose enmity it is impossible to allay or subdue—these more boisterous ebullitions have wellnigh died away. The adventurer, the speculator, the infidel, the bigot, must now avail themselves of other expedients, and have recourse to other weapons.

The missionary enterprise has secured to itself no small portion of secular respectability; there are many who are now disposed to do it homage on account of its indirect results. They have, indeed, no sympathy with its nobler aims. That

which is almost nothing in the estimation of the Christian—(and only any thing because of its accessary and incidental character with respect to the particular department of his benevolence and zeal)—the burning surface, the elaborate ornament, the productions of the soil—these form the scope and the reward of all their exertions: the soul, the object of our care; the salvation of the soul, the prize of our ambition, have no points of attraction, and no ground of admiration for them. How could they value in others that which they in themselves do not appreciate? How could they desire for others that which they do not seek for themselves?

But there are accidents to our cause, and in our progress, which are levelled to their understanding—inferior spoils which are congenial to their tastes. The subserviency of missions to literature and science—in arranging languages whose name had not hitherto been heard—in supplying knowledge touching mythologies which had hitherto been screened from every curious eye, and fenced from every intrusive footstep—in marking, with a very accurate geography, the chart of rivers and oceans, states and countries—in collating facts which sustain the most important conclusions and systems in physical truth;—the favourable influence of missions in providing security for persons, and infusing confidence into barter, as well as opening new fields, and establishing fresh interchanges, by accustoming the savage to social institutions—the grandeur of the very scheme of missions taking hold upon the imagination, and of the mind, as the nearest possible

approach to disinterested virtue, embodying that which had been hopeless as a vision, and baseless as a dream—the certain success of missions—certain, as it is seen in a thousand peaceful trophies of civilization, mild manners, and enlightened principles; these great issues have surrounded missions with a considerable share of favour, and have adjudged to them a character even of renown.

The enmity of the human heart is what it ever was against the revealed history of free mercy, and the strict purity of Christianity. But some of its stronger efforts, in consequence of these circumstances, have been remitted—some of its wilder frenzies have been dropped. At least, it never can be made a charge against us that we are engaged in an untried invasion, in a rash experiment. We have the results before us, and that charge is reduced to silence, if not put to shame. We are truly thankful that we can refer to an effect which runs within the range of worldly prepossessions; but chiefly we rejoice over the deeper process into which the unrenowned mind cannot enter—a hid treasure, which the hopes and sympathies of the world can never make its own—the consequences that a solemn treaty attaches to all that take a part in missionary operations. This thing is not done in a corner; they are a city set upon a hill, and every shadow cast from it is observed; they are the light of the world, and every wavering of the flame is noticed. Their language is extensively quoted; their deportment is narrowly watched; they have to pass through a fearless scrutiny heated sevenfold. Myriads of eyes are upon them—eyes which stand out with suspicion, with jealousy, with distrust, with resentment, with rage. Hence arises the necessity of the greatest caution and prudence, as well as of the greatest frankness and intrepidity. Ought we not “to walk in the fear of the Lord, because of the reproach of our enemies?”

But we would rather make this a personal inducement and reason arising out of the subject itself. Think of its sublime purpose, its high calling; think of the estimate which has been fixed upon it—accessively by apostles, by evange-

lists, by martyrs; think of the manner in which it approves itself to every holy precedent and principle, and commends itself to every holy sentiment and affection; think of your professed subjection to the gospel of Christ, and of “the power which worketh in you mightily;” think of the souls of the heathen in their uncomputed millions, in their unfathomable woes; and it will then be easy to convict the most generous of selfishness, the most disinterested of indifference, the most susceptible of apathy, the most devoted of disaffection, the most liberal of parsimony, the most constant of fickleness, the most active of supineness and sloth. Should we not study a delicate and a sensitive consistency? What manner of persons ought we to be?

We do good by communicating it. We are employed in an effort and a system of well doing. But let us clothe ourselves with the things that are amiable and of good report. Let us shun the *appearance* of evil; and, though certain that it is a good, let us preclude the possibility of that good being “evil spoken of.” You will allow me, therefore, my brethren, to give the following discourse a practical bearing and character. It shall be left to others to raise more delightful themes. We seem to have reached a crisis; we ought now to come to a pause. What are we doing? What is the general impression of what we have done? There may be inconsistencies amongst those who profess themselves the friends of the Christian enterprise of missions; there may be inconsistencies, and “faithful are the wounds of a friend.” There is no doubt in our own mind as to the genuineness, as to the reality of the beneficence itself; but let us not give any occasion to them who seek occasion by which that beneficence might at all come under suspicion. Some of these inconsistencies shall now be stated. I throw myself upon your candour—many of you know the heart of a stranger; and, whilst I will endeavour to feel as little as possible a stranger amongst you, relieve that almost irrepressible sense of estrangement by your candour and by your prayers.

*We are inconsistent when the truth we*

*propagate among others we do not receive and experience ourselves.*

Create any great system of efforts, and many are blindly carried away by it. All facilities will be given to it; these will be the weight and sanction of example; the very symptoms of proselytism and party will command its influence; the machinery is thrown into play; the eddy is seen sweeping round within the vortex; and how many are there who are blindly and insensibly hurried onward by the stroke of the one, or drawn in by the suction of the other!

Apply these considerations to the missionary apparatus. This is a scheme of labours most expansive, most complicated, and most penetrating. These labours embrace each sex, each condition, each class. They stand like the cherub with outstretched wings and with human hand, showing *how far* they can extend their power, and *with what particularity* it can be applied by them. It is impossible that any now can allege the excuse, "No man hath hired me." We have a chain by which to transmit the faintest spark; we have a channel by which to pour the smallest drop; we have a distributive power by which our efforts are so stimulated that they may tell upon the world. Therefore, there are thousands who enter into this scheme with pleasure and with fervour. We do not denounce their sincerity. "Come, see my zeal," said Jehu, "for the Lord;" but it is subjoined, "Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel; for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin." And yet, what is more audacious in folly, more impious in irreligion, than to build that which you continue to undermine!—to heal that which you continue to inflame!—to reconcile that which you continue to agitate!—to cleanse that which you continue to defile!—to enforce that which you continue to supersede! You make a mock of sin, and warn men against it; you desire, professedly, that "the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God," and neglect the great salvation; you tear down that which you avow yourselves intent upon building up; you tread

under foot the Son of God, while you hold him up to the notice and the allegiance of the world.

To whom can we compare this generation? There were builders of the ark whose floating corpses were sunk beneath it when it rose upon the bosom of the floods. There were donors of the tabernacle who were as lepers thrust beyond the camp, or as blasphemers, stoned without relief. There were artificers of the temple who never there left their offerings, and never there worshipped their God. Have you thought of that meeting which awaits you? For it is possible that you have been at work, and that your good, liable to be evil spoken of, is nevertheless good. The heathen, perhaps, shall acknowledge you in a future age—they shall acknowledge you, at the judgment-seat, as the instruments of bringing them to the knowledge of the Saviour, to that knowledge which is life eternal. Methinks that with the strong instincts of gratitude they know even as ye are known. Methinks that they now approach you, and that they call upon you to receive their grateful acknowledgments. What is their language? "We owe to you that we are in Christ—you who were in Christ before us. You heard our cry, and fled to our relief; you saw our misery, and sent for its alleviation. Take these harps, and tune the songs; take these crowns, and pay the tribute." Why are you rooted to the spot? Why are your eyes cast down upon the ground? Why does your tongue cleave to the roof of your mouth? Why do you refuse their advances, and decline their solicitations? Why gathers on that face that paleness? Why scares your ear that shriek? The heathens whom you have saved—see, they fly to their heaven as the doves to their windows. Mark their ecstacy—listen to their song. The door is shut, *and you stand without*; the guest-chamber is filled, *and you are not within*; the assemblage is complete, *and you are not comprehended*; the harvest is passed, the summer is ended, *and you are not saved!*

*We are inconsistent, secondly, when we violate the solemnity due to missionary transactions.*

They who have suitably pondered them, who have taken their place and part in them, have always confessed that they were very auspicious to a growth in grace, and very confirmatory to the establishment of the heart in grace. They have confessed that they were profitable, in every respect, and to all—"profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." He who bears the aromatic plant will surely betray its fragrance; and he who has wrought upon the gem and the gold will carry away with him some of the brilliant flings, some of the precious dust.

But it may be asked, Have we not allowed, too frequently and too largely, a spirit of flippancy, and almost of levity, to encroach upon this sacred theme? We have not been mollified with all its circumstances, and have not been stricken with all its horrors. A world in misery is a painful spectacle—a world in rebellion is an appalling sight. Could the traveller, as he explores the vestiges of an ancient city,—its fallen theatres, its broken aqueducts, its crumbling temples—could he explore these in a listless spirit? Could the philanthropist traverse the wards of a lazaretto, and the cells of a prison, in a careless and sportive vein? Could the negotiator address the disaffected and the insurgent in jocular tones and terms? Could the high-priest, when, on the great day of atonement, he went, and not without blood, into the holiest of all, strike the dulcimer, or rejoice in the dance? Should not our spirits be better disciplined? Should not our accents tremble, and the very fashion of our countenance change? We follow the long procession of eternal death; and should we not be as the mourners going about the streets? We watch the commencing symptoms of the second death; and should we not shudder while the worm which never dies begins to uncoil and to gnaw? We observe the earliest kindlings of the pit, and almost, like them who approach its mouth, are scathed with the blast; and while the numberless victims are sinking into it, should not great fear come upon the church, and as many as hear of these things?

There is a confusion and an indefiniteness when we speak of the pagan world. It is not a light cure of souls—it is not a small plantation reclaimed from the wilderness: we are to make the little and the scantling disappear, and the untold and the incalculable numbers burst into sight—continuous, successive as the waves of the sea, all rolling on, and all dying away upon an unseen shore. And what is our feeling? Is it that of pity? There is nothing of lightness in the ingredients that form that emotion: there may be placidity, but that is its strongest form: pity is thoughtful, and pensive, and sad. Oh, let not our "good be evil spoken of" by our betrayal into any thing that is light or trivial, or unworthy of the theme. Let us be solemn as Jesus when he upbraided Capernaum, and tender as when he wept over Jerusalem. Let us be overwhelmed with the thought of human guilt, and the sense of human misery, as when the man of sorrows fell upon his face in Gethsemane, with strong cries and tears.

3dly. *Our good may be evil spoken of when we form a partial and an unequal estimate of what is near and what is distant in the condition of the human family.*

Prejudice governs us all. As the human mind rejects two classes of emotions equally strong, so the human conduct rejects two courses of equally intense activities. We may not, perhaps, regard the one object too strongly; but, in consequence of not regarding aright, either may receive from us the most unmerited treatment. Hence, therefore, there springs a necessity, in all our Christian labours, of a well-regulated consistency, of a nicely-proportioned zeal. Let our judgment be warmed by our feelings, but let our feelings be regulated by our judgment.

Fix your eye, my brethren, on your native land. There are thousands, there are millions, besotted, embroiled, surrounded by a light which never enters them, addressed by a power which has no ascendancy over them. In many respects their condition is most wretched, because they have an accountability: they are within the light, and the hope is set before them; and yet these die within

our sight—they perish at our door. They are our brethren, our kinsmen according to the flesh; are we to spurn them in the magnificence of our project, in the comprehensiveness of our scheme? Should we not remember that disciple, of whom it is recorded, “He first findeth his own brother?” Should we not think of that counsel given to him that was restored, “Go home, and tell thy kindred what great things the Lord hath done for thee, and how he hath had mercy upon thee?” Ought we not to dwell upon the memorable instruction—“Beginning at Jerusalem?”

Cast your eyes, my brethren—or rather your mind—upon the vast tracts of pagan superstition. You cannot tell what is the darkness which broods over them, for there is no contrasting light; you cannot judge the dimensions of their misery, for there is no standard of relief or consolation. Christ has not been named among them; they know not that there is a Holy Ghost; they are without hope in the world. What misery is their lot! What a precipice is their eternity! And, in many respects, how must we think of them, when they have not so many missionaries in the united phalanx among them all as we have, perhaps, in some favoured district of our beloved land!

All souls are equal. It may be that there is a diversity in original faculty, as well as in acquirements and in endowments; but there is little difference in the capacity to suffer, and there is no difference in the capacity to exist. Some spirits may present a broader surface for evil, but none a stronger texture for being:—in these they are alike, whether the drudging slave in the mine, or the monarch flaming with the jewel it may supply; whether the outcast who has not a burial-place, or the possessor of many estates; whether him whom all spurn and avoid, or the favourite of fortune and of fame. But our “good will be evil spoken of,” if we do not regard men as men; if we allow the alien to dispel all thoughts of the naked, or the naked to dispel all thoughts of the alien. There cannot be more valuable spirits than those which throng the shores of the Ganges, the Indus, and the Nile; but they are not

less valuable spirits which throng the majestic strands of the Severn, or lie on the banks of the Avon and the Ex. Let not the near engross the distant; and let not the distant out-dazzle the near.

4thly. *Our good may be evil spoken of when the due relation between effort and devotion is forgotten.*

There is a devotion that becomes selfish: it is indulgent and indolent; it is a passionless quietism; it is a contemplative dream. It will hear of no sacrifice; on no pretence will it be disturbed; it wraps itself in luxuriant ease, and it is cloistered from all strife and danger; like the bird which seeks the crystal fountain, sits in its solitary calm, and desires nothing but to muse the shadow of its unruffled beauty. There is an exertion which becomes arrogant and profane. It is an ostentatious bustle; it is an impious usurpation, it is an artificial and mechanical frame. Its axe and its hammer send their jarring notes through the most secret and retired recesses of the sacred shrine; and it may be compared to the eagle-bird, rising into the firmament, and gazing upon the sun, with unshrinking eye and with untiring fire.

Now, devotion and exertion must be blended. “Stand still,” said the legislator, “and behold the salvation of God!” But what said the answer of God unto him?—“Why cryest thou unto me? Speak to the people that they go forward.” They were to see that salvation; but that salvation was to be realized in connexion with human agency—not by standing still, but by going forward: and they sang the praises of their God. And so the apostle teaches us that we should labour always—“not slothful in business, fervent in spirit.” Our devotion must not be fitful and intermittent; our exertions must not be casual and accidental; we must endeavour to unite the two. Think of the apostles: they gave themselves to the word of God and to prayer, and they ministered unto the Lord; but, having received the gift of Pentecost, what were the acts they performed, and what were the achievements they consummated? Look at angels: high is their contemplation; profound is their study; wondrous is

silence is their awe; and they veil their faces with their wings; but they have their errands and commissions, and "he makes his angels spirits, and his ministers a flaming fire:" they are swift to do his will and to hearken to his voice. Look at the Son of God and the Son of man: the temple trumpet ever called him to the house of prayer; each festive season witnessed him among the pilgrims; he spent whole nights in devotion;—but he "went about doing good." Let us, therefore, determine to pray, in order to sanctify our exertions; and to exert ourselves, in order to authenticate our prayers. Let us take heaven by force, by the means of the one; and earth by force, through the means of the other. Let us, by the twofold instrumentality, prove that we are sincere for God, and sincere to men. Let us *lift up* our hands, and let us *stretch forth* our hands. Let us have hearts filled with bravery, and let us carry heroically to the victory the standard which we have loved, deposited on the altar, and hallowed by the sacrifice.

5thly. *Our good may be evil spoken of when we encourage worldly excitement.*

There is a hostile principle in particular maxims, views, opinions, sensibilities, usages, institutions, which the world is made to present. This is the comprehensive term employed by Scripture; and epithet after epithet of disgust is poured out upon that principle. We are told that its incitements are most subtle and intoxicating: and He, who came travelling in the greatness of his strength, did not grapple with a shadow; and when he overcame the world, it was not a phantom that he conquered. Happy are we, when, in imitation of our Master and Founder, we can make such a declaration as this, "We have not received the spirit of the world: this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith."

But are none of our religious institutions tinged with such a spirit? Are none of them conformed to such a model? Is there nothing of fashionable excitement, nothing of sentimental feeling, nothing of evasion of truth, no suppression of evidence, no endeavour at effect? Is there nothing like a worldly calculation,

and a worldly aggrandizement, and a worldly policy, and a worldly precaution? It becomes us, my brethren, to disengage ourselves from such a snare, by maintaining the consistency of our character in the beauty of holiness—the firmness of our principle, as we are not our own—and the strictness of our motive, with our spirit serving God in the gospel of his Son. Oh, let us not throw round so hallowed a cause, so sacred a work, any of this meretricious spirit: let us not seek to please, any more than we seek to offend.

6thly. *Our good may be evil spoken of when we entertain light impressions of the eternal future of the heathen.*

We have been told that many travellers and discoverers have been sometimes discredited, when they inform savage tribes that the reason for incurring all their toils and dangers was to trace a river's source, or to ascertain a planet's transmission. And we have also been told that, while our missionaries have obtained credit for their enterprise and their motives, they also have been upbraided because their errand took not a firmer hold, and are asked how it is that their announcements receive a more speedy reception. Our institution can alone stand upon this admission—the certain as well as the tremendous danger of the heathen world.

We shall be told of their natural religion, of their roamings in the forest, and their burrowings in the wood. We shall be told of their simple and their artless lives, of their kind and hospitable hearts; and so, for a time, we may have been deceived by, but we have now learnt to understand, the fictions of a Le Bos and a Choo Loo. We shall be told of their conscious law; but let it be also told, that that law which they are unto themselves they have broken; and they have the dread consciousness running through their spirits that they who do these things are worthy of death. We shall be told of their consistent worship, and of their classical systems of religion; for it is not, in the estimate of men, a point of any moment, whether homage rises from this earth to the adulterer and to the murderer, or to Jehovah, the Holy

One. We shall be told of their ignorance of Christianity; and we know that they are not condemned for its rejection. But what does Christianity suppose concerning any heathen? That that heathen is in a fallen state, and in a perishing dilemma; and that, unless he believes, he must perish, and not have everlasting life; and that if he does perish, he perishes under the sanctions of an immutable justice—justice bound up with all the obligations of the primeval law.

Perhaps it may be said that no other motive could ever enter into our missionary operations—and perhaps for a time none other did; but then, this is the very motive given to our modern philosophy and theology. Charity is said to be the perverted errand; and we are asked whether we can conceive, or whether it is credible, that that should be the only errand. Alas, my brethren, that we should be made judges one of another! then are we judges of the law, and not doers of it. God is judge—he will respect his character; and we affect not that morbid piety and jealousy concerning his character, which would represent him as more censorious than we are ourselves. We therefore say, Make missionary operations any question of civilization—make them any question of comparative advantage, or of ameliorated state—giving an increase of light already sufficient, and a confirmation of hope already well founded—make them the mere instruments for smoothing and turning the path, although it winds to safety and to bliss—and immediately the business will come to nought, and they will reject it as a needless waste, and as a meaningless superfluity.

7thly. *Our good is liable to be traduced and to be evil spoken of, when we obtrude party singularities into our missionary scheme.*

The names of denominations and of sects are convenient; they are self-defining and intelligible; they save very much time, and prevent considerable circumlocution. But let us remember that that which distinguishes those who alike hold the Head, and love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, is but the earthly guise and

attire of Christianity, which she will put away when she passes the celestial threshold; that it is only the scaffolding and the platform, quite distinct from the building: and that, when it is complete, the scaffold and the platform will be done away. We wonder not that in our colonies party denominations are found; and even in flags over which our flag does not wave, not annexed to our crown, it is no less probable that the stranger there, the exile from his beloved home, should cleave to some fondly cherished scheme, and to some dearly-remembered distinctions. But all this is inferior to Christianity itself; all this is very likely to embarrass the opening mind and the developing judgment of the heathen convert. As far as possible, let the river, in its most distant and ample streams, lose the particular impregnation of its source; let the banners of the universal host, while they retain their particular devices, most prominently exhibit the royal emblazonments common to them all. We must remember that, if we would gain upon the opinions, if we would obtain the suffrages, of the heathen world, it is quite necessary that we give them pure religion and undefiled.

In the mean time let us make the best of it. Jarrings there are abroad; and sometimes, though very faintly, they may be heard abroad. There is diversity, but there need not be difference; there is diversity, but there need not be collision. If we may not possess the colourless ray of the virgin light, let us rejoice in the prismatic hue; if we cannot possess the transparent diamond, let us be content to build up our foundation with precious stones of divers colours. You remember the inter-community of the heathen world; they did not quarrel over their religion: "They helped every one his neighbour, and each said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering; and he fastened it with nails that it should not be moved." Let us no more condemn nor blame each other, though blamed enough elsewhere; but strive, in

offices of love, how we may lighten each other's burdens in the share of woe.

8thly. *Our good is evil spoken of, and liable to become the object of detraction, when we disparage or make light of the missionary character itself.*

By these operations, a school has been formed in which greatness has built itself a house, with heroism of purpose, and dint of courage, and lovely and sublime enthusiasm and zeal. We love to think of such men, and we think that nothing is too great to be conceded to them, and that no honour is too vast to be devolved upon them. But is it not very possible that sometimes to such men we give a servile rank, a grudging support, a supercilious patronage? Do we not deem them too much our agents whom we may employ, whose purposes we may counteract, and whose will we may control? I know there must be law—I know there must be arrangement—I know there must be some authority, and some deference. But I remember how missionaries have sometimes been dealt with and spoken of, and then contrast this with the conduct of the generous Paul—who had such a claim to command, and who was so likely to be right—he wished Apollos to proceed in a particular course, and to do a particular work; but Paul was satisfied when he found that “his will was not at all to come.” My brethren, let us remember that if there be any upon earth worthy of a generous confidence, worthy of a large discretion, worthy of a delicate tenderness, worthy of a cordial esteem, it is these devoted men who have “hazarded their lives for the sake of the Lord Jesus.” Let us, rather than dictate to them, or offer any disparagement of their characters and their motives, bow down before the men of such minds, and seek more the happiness of such hearts.

9thly. *Our good may be evil spoken of in this missionary connexion, when we adopt harsher rules respecting our distant proselytes than obtain in our churches at home.*

We have deviations, we have irregularities, we have wild fancies, we have fanatical superstitions. What age or what land ever yet witnessed speculations

of opinion so monstrous, interpretations of Scripture so extravagant, crudities of sentiment so disgusting, claims of infallibility so atrocious, simulations of inspiration so indecent and profane? If there be such a thing as religious insanity, we certainly have of late been favoured with some of its strangest contortions, the most fantastic babblings. And can we be surprised if error, if enthusiasm, if some visionary, if some absurdity, spring up in our churches abroad—weeds in the wastes so recently redeemed—demons returning to the dwelling which has been so lately emptied, swept, and garnished—the heaving of the storm only just now dispelled, the rocking of the ocean just allayed. But it would be better to turn from them, and to turn from ourselves; let us think of all the wildnesses of extravagance in the churches of Galatia and Corinth, and then say whether we ought in fact to speak harsher of those who may have gone astray under circumstances of peculiar temptation, where character could not have been well formed, principle well settled, or feeling well disciplined.

Again. *Our good may be evil spoken of when we anticipate results from missionary labours untenable on scriptural ground.*

There has ever been a hope of some bright reversion, and some improved order of things awaiting mankind. This has lighted up the dying eye, and strengthened and fortified the sinking heart, of the wisest and the best of our race. Philosophy has clung to it—poetry has almost made it its own—the pythoness spoke of it upon her tripod—and the sibyl wrote it on her mystic leaf: from Delphi these promises went forth; and men have been always taught that there is a halcyon period coming when all their wrongs shall be redressed, and the presages of virtue be realized. Christianity consecrates this hope; it seems to wind around it the best yearnings and fibres of their bosoms. Remember what the gospel is: it is complete, it is whole. Therefore anticipate nothing that will innovate upon its character, nothing that will displace its present claims, or its present glories. It is its honour that it cometh not with observation; nor can we find it with any



observation. Therefore "if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not," Whatever is the consummation, it must be true to the principles and the promises of our religion. And there are visions, without any disputed points—visions of glory, which stretch away to the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills—there are ages of peace which shall rise with the last syllable of recorded time. We wait no other arrival of the day that shall cover our earth with thorns and with briers—we want no other covenant with the stones, and with the beasts of the field—we want no other period but a world filled with trees of the Lord's right hand planting—we want no other trees of life but those whose leaves are for the healing of the nation—we want no other new heaven, no other new earth, but that in which dwelleth righteousness. Tell me, then, of such a millennium as this contained in these words, supposing them to be addressed to the world at large:—"Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men."—"Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you." Mark them which walk so, and paradise is restored, and Eden is regained.

Lastly, *Our good may be evil spoken of if we do not follow up our success.*

We have made a lodgment; and there are those who have gone up to the high places of the field, and they call on us to aid them, or they must perish in the breach. There is a harvest, and it bends under its own fruitful weight; it invites the sickle; and the wind begins to moan, and the air to chill; and in a little time the summer will have passed; and where thousands of hands should gather the spoil, and thousands of voices should swell the carol, there is seen, at immense intervals, solitary labourers, standing breast high, marked by the hopeless impracticability of their work, and by the cheerless silence of their sphere of labour. We are committed to Christianity—we are committed to all who are opposed to Christianity; we declare virtually that it is not worth a final exertion if now we give way; we declare, as we thus cruelly

thrust at the cause of Christianity, that all the past has been an idle dream, and that now we care not to give substantiation to it.

Such, my brethren, is the series of practical observations which I have endeavoured to impress on your minds; endeavouring to show you, that though you are doing good, yet that that good is liable to some imputation, and that it must be so done as to avoid and to resist all such imputations. I congratulate you on the results of your former benevolence, which have reached me in a distant part. We in a distant part, our pastors and teachers, have rejoiced in your good, and in our behalf that that good could not be evil spoken of. But it is necessary to persevere; and never are we in so great danger as when we imagine all danger is escaped. Therefore, look well to your motives, look well to your plans, look well to your exertions; and especially let not the charge of any thing new be brought against you. True, the subject has again and again been canvassed—made the subject of hundreds of discourses, addresses, and epistles. Show that it was principle that made you espouse it; and show it is no want of principle characterizes you in deserting it. Desert it you will not. You may have suffered as other cities have suffered, as other towns still suffer; yet nevertheless remember there is something you may withdraw from self—something you may retrench from indulgence: though when I speak to such a Christian assembly, I declare that to beg I am ashamed.

I rather will make my closing appeal to those who received one in the earlier part of the exhortation—you who have long heard the gospel, and have heard it in vain—lulled into sleep by the very beseechings of mercy, as well as by the very thunders of denunciation. You have had line upon line, precept upon precept. You ask us what is the fate of the pagan: alas! we can only say "the wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God,"—who have not liked to retain God in their knowledge, and who have not only done evil things themselves, but have had pleasure in

them that have done them. This is the fate of every heathen who dies in unrepented and unforgiven sin. And how shall he call on Christ as a Saviour of whom he has not heard? How shall he hear without a preacher? But as to your fate—if there be any thing like a veil over his—as to yours, it is written distinctly, it is written signally; and he who runneth may read. You who have no cloak for your sins—you perish like Nadab and Abihu, before the mercy-seat; you perish, like the inhabitants of Jerusalem, bathed with a Saviour's tears. You perish, but you wade through the blood of the cross in your journey to hell; and you see the form that hung upon it, and you hear the voice that spake from it; and that form shall ever haunt your eye, and that voice shall ever haunt your ear, while for eternity you are tormented with the devils and the damned. Yours is the retribution of incensed mercy, and wearied forbearance, and exasperated love. Yours is not the retribution of the Jew—yours is not the retribution of the pagan; yours is a retribution all your own: it is not even the retribution which is allotted to the devil, though you share the everlasting fire with the devil and his angels. No—there is a pang in it which you yourself have inflicted; there is a peculiarity in it which you yourself have infused. And methinks that pagans and Jews, and the devils themselves, as they see you tossing in the fire—see you sinking from gulf to gulf, and from deep to deep, will be glad to escape the agitation of your rage—be glad to escape the fierce upbraidings of your voice—be glad to escape the violent, the overwhelming terrors of your eye. Like the spectators of the mystic Babylon, they will “stand afar off, for fear of your torment.” How shall you escape if you persecute, oppose, jeer? No, no: how shall you escape *if you neglect so great salvation?* May God add his blessing. Amen and amen.

#### ON THE RE-UNION OF GOOD MEN IN A FUTURE STATE.

If the mere conception of the re-union of good men in a future state infused a momentary rapture into the mind of Tully; if an airy speculation, for there is reason to fear it had little hold on his convictions, could inspire him with such delight, what may we be expected to feel, who are assured of such an event by the *true sayings of God!* How should we rejoice in the prospect of spending a blissful eternity with those whom we loved on earth, of seeing them emerge from the ruins of the tomb, and the deeper ruins of the fall, not only uninjured, but refined and perfected, “with every tear wiped from their eyes,” standing before the throne of God and the Lamb. What delight will it afford to renew the sweet counsel we have taken together, to recount the toils of combat, and the labour of the way, and to approach the throne of God, in company, in order to join in the symphonies of heavenly voices, and lose ourselves amidst the splendours and fruitions of the beatific vision!

To that state all the pious on earth are tending; and if there is a law from whose operation none are exempt, which irresistibly conveys their bodies to darkness and to dust, there is another, not less certain or less powerful, which conducts their spirits to the abode of bliss, the bosom of their Father and their God. The wheels of nature are not made to roll backward; every thing presses on towards eternity; from the birth of time an impetuous current has set in, which bears all the sons of men towards that interminable ocean. Meanwhile heaven is attracting to itself whatever is congenial to its nature, is enriching itself by the spoils of earth, and collecting within its capacious bosom whatever is pure, permanent, and divine, leaving nothing for the last fire to consume but the objects and the slaves of concupiscence.—Hall.

## SERMON VIII.

### THE NATURE AND CONSEQUENCES OF IMPENITENCE.

BY THE REV. J. A. JAMES

OF BIRMINGHAM.

*"But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."*—Rom. ii. 5.

You will very naturally and very justly conclude, that, if the sermon harmonize with the spirit of the text, the preacher does not intend to-night to trifle with your souls. God, in mercy to himself and you, forbid that he should! The man that can trifle in the situation he now occupies, and in presence of the scene by which he is now surrounded, must be as incapable of impression from objects truly sublime, as he would be forgetful of the object which brought him to the pulpit, and unmindful of his responsibility to Him that sent him there. Listen to me while I very plainly unfold and enforce the meaning of the text; and it shall be my endeavour that nothing in the mode of representation adopted on this occasion shall stand between the truth and your consciences.

The love of money may be said to be the ruling passion of the great portion of mankind. How eager are their desires—how great their efforts—how ingenious their plans—how unwearied their industry, to lay up wealth! And yet, as they brought nothing into the world, so neither will they take any thing with them when they leave it. All the fruits of their labour they must leave behind them; and, unattended by any thing but the results of their conduct, enter into the presence of the all-searching, the all-seeing God. But there is a sense in which it may be said *all* men are laying up treasures in eternity. Of the *righteous* it is said they are laying up treasure (or, at least, they are exhorted to do so, and therefore it is

implied they do it)—that they lay up *treasure in heaven*: of the *wicked* it is said, in the text, that they lay up *treasure in hell*. After the hardness and impenitent heart that they possess—that is, according to their hard and impenitent heart, they treasure up unto themselves *wrath* against the day of wrath.

This language was primarily addressed to the Jews. The apostle intended to impress them with the idea that all the interpositions of God on the behalf of their nation, through every period of its history, was designed to lead them to repentance, but, instead of complying with this design, they were wilfully ignorant of it—they were obstinately impenitent and unbelieving; and, instead of being melted to repentance by the riches of mercy, they hardened themselves by unbelief and impenitence, so as to expose themselves to the wrath of God. Viewing them in their collective capacity, as a *nation*, the text received its accomplishment when the Romans came and burnt their city and temple, and carried into a miserable captivity all who survived the slaughter of the siege; and so great, so unparalleled was the misery endured by Jerusalem during that awful period, that, to quote the language of Josephus, "it seemed as if hell had been let loose to consume them with all its fires, and curse them with all its plagues." But these sufferings were only the type of that misery which, as *individuals*, they endure in the unseen world. It is to this more especially the

language of the text refers. It bears on the case of all—that is, of all the impenitent; and I design, under the first head of discourse, to consider *the nature of impenitence*; and, in the second place, *the penal consequences of it*.

In the first place, we are to consider **THE NATURE OF IMPENITENCE**. “After thy hardness and impenitent heart;” or, “thy hard and impenitent heart.” A hard heart is the same as an impenitent one, and an impenitent the same as a hard heart. Hard-heartedness in reference to religion has the same meaning as it has in reference to other concerns. When we speak of a hard-hearted man in reference to his conduct to his fellow-creatures, we speak of one that has no susceptibility to impressions of pity, no feeling for the misfortunes of others—one that is not moved by the sight of another’s woe;—in short, one that is without feeling for the distresses of the human race. A hard heart in reference to religion means the same thing, only the object is changed. A heart destitute of feeling in reference to religion means a mind that has no clear views of sin, a heart that has no convictions, no emotions of grief on account of its transgressions in the sight of God. There are various degrees of hard-heartedness. Some are given up to what is called *total and judicial obduracy*. There are no gleams of conviction in their judgment; there are no emotions of grief for their transgressions in their hearts. Others are only *partially* hard-hearted. In this sense of the phrase they do occasionally relent; there are moments when the mind seems to begin to perceive its awful condition in the sight of God, and when the heart begins in some measure to feel its dangers. But these seasons are transient, and give way to predominant indifference in reference to sin, and pardon, and eternal life.

But perhaps we shall better understand this subject if we consider what is the nature of *penitence*; for impenitence being a negative term, we shall clearly understand it if we take a view of its positive nature.

Penitence means, then, *a clear view of our depraved nature and guilty conduct as*

*tried by the pure and perfect law of God*; not merely some general notion, taken up by education or from others, that we are not quite perfect, and that matters are not altogether with us as they should be; but it is founded upon, and necessarily implies, a clear view of our sinful state as transgressors against God’s laws—that we have broken them a thousand and a thousand times, in thought, word, and deed. Connected with this, where there is true penitence, there is *a consciousness that we are deservedly under the wrath of God, and the curse of that law which our sins have violated*. The man who is not prepared to admit that he has sinned to this extent, to such an extent as to be under the wrath of God, condemned to die and deserving of hell—the man who is not prepared to admit his sin to this extent is not convinced of sin, and can have no penitence on account of it. Connected with this clear view of his sinful state, and that, in consequence, he is exposed to the wrath of God, and under the condemnation of the law—in connexion with, and in addition to this, wherever there is penitence *there is alarm*. The man is startled in his indifference, awakened to see his awful condition, and that, unless something be done, he must perish, and perish eternally. It is impossible the mind can be at ease, carelessly indifferent, without the emotion of fear, that is, in a state of penitence. Connected with this, *there is an ingenuous disposition to confess sin to God*, without extenuation, without excuse, without self-defence. There is no penitence where there is a disposition to palliate, and to think well of ourselves. On the contrary, penitence causes a man to smite on his breast, saying, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” Penitence implies *grief for sin*, mourning over it. And again, penitence implies *a disposition to forsake sin*, as that which is exceedingly hateful to him by whom it is indulged. Hence you observe the meaning of the apostle’s expression when he distinguishes between sorrow and repentance:—“Godly sorrow worketh repentance that needeth not to be repented of.” That is, where there is genuine grief for sin, it will produce an entire change of

mind in reference to the object that grieves it; it will produce hatred to sin, and a resolution to forsake it. And there will be no true repentance where there is not connected with it *faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the only way by which sin can be forgiven.*

Now, my hearers, this is *penitence*; and *impenitence* means, of course, the opposite to this. The man who is *not* convinced of sin—the man who is *not* alarmed—who does *not* see that he is under the wrath of God, and deservedly exposed to eternal misery—who does *not* grieve over his sin—who does *not* hate and forsake it—who does *not* depend on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation—such a man is *impenitent*; he is hard-hearted towards God, and every thing connected with religion.

Now, there may be this impenitence, this hardness of heart, where there is much that is morally amiable in the conduct of those to whom I am now referring. Towards their fellow-creatures there may be much genuine pity, much tenderness of spirit, much benevolence towards men, and yet not one spark of penitence in the sight of God. We have heard of many of the most lovely of their species who yet appear to be altogether in the dark with respect to their spiritual condition—who have no conviction of sin, no genuine penitence; but are living in the most confirmed hardness of heart. Perhaps you may not see the guilt of this want of penitence—this hardness of heart; but it really contains in itself every aggravation that sin admits of. There is, for instance, *rebellion against the authority of God*, who commands men every where to repent. There is *great insult offered to God*: for in proportion to the excellence of any being whom we may offend, should be the promptness of our mind to confess the offence and mourn over it. How prompt, then, should we be to hasten to the footstool of the divine throne, and confess the sins we have committed against the infinitely blessed, glorious, and holy God! So that the man without penitence is living in a state of aggravated insult against Jehovah; as if, though he ought to be very sorry for the very smallest offence against his fellow-creatures,

and ought most solicitously to seek forgiveness, yet he may go on offending against God, trampling under foot every one of his precepts, caring nothing about the matter; as if Jehovah were that only being in the universe whom it should not grieve us to offend. It is a *great contempt of the law of God*, that, after we have trampled it under foot, and accounted it an unholy thing—that then we should have no grief for the injury we have done it. And, moreover, a want of penitence marks a *total rejection of the whole scheme of mercy in the gospel*. If we have no brokenness of heart, if we are not brought to humble ourselves in the sight of God, we are not in a state of mind that at all prepares us to receive the gospel; we are neglecting the great salvation; and are adding to all our other sins contempt of the Son of God in his mediatorial capacity and work.

My friends, you will perceive, then, that the want of penitence is a most awful crime; it comprehends every aggravation of iniquity. The impenitent man is going on, adding sin to sin; and this is the link that binds him to an unconverted and sinful state. It is of great importance that I represent this matter, because the latter part of the subject is to state to you the punishment, THE CONSEQUENCES THAT WILL FOLLOW UPON IMPENITENCE; and, as they are very terrible, it should be manifest that the sin that will bring them is equally great.

Now turn your attention first to *the time when the punishment will be inflicted*. And before we proceed, let me entreat you, my dear hearers, to ask yourselves the question, "Have I yet been brought by the Spirit's teaching and grace to true penitence, or am I still impenitent? Is not my heart hardened, insensible to abiding impressions on religious subjects? If so, I am the very person whose punishment the preacher is about to describe." Just so: you are the man—you, whoever you are, who are still destitute of "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."

*The time when this punishment will be inflicted.* It is very true that the moment we die we enter into heaven or hell. I

am not quite sure that mankind consider this so frequently as they ought: they stop at the article of death. Death is the most awful catastrophe that can happen to us in this world; but the most awful event that can happen in this world is as nothing compared with what is to follow. We are all just as near to heaven or hell as we are to death: if this night we die, we sink to the torments of lost souls, or rise to the felicities of redeemed ones. But neither the happiness of the righteous nor the punishment of the wicked is complete at death. At the morning of the resurrection the body is to be reassociated with the spirit; and then the whole man is to enter on his endless career of torment or of bliss.

Observe how it is spoken of: "*The day of wrath.*" The day of judgment will be to the wicked nothing but a day of wrath; all they see, all they hear, all they feel, all they anticipate, will be unmixed wrath. It will be to them as the deluge was to the impenitent and unbelieving in the time of Noah. They saw the fountains of the great deep breaking up, and the windows of heaven thrown open; they heard the strange uproar, and felt themselves in the midst of the wild confusion of a dissolving world, as it must have appeared to them; and in every thing around them, in all they saw and heard, they beheld nothing but awful justice, fearful and indescribable vengeance. So will it be with the wicked, the impenitent, in the day of judgment: it will be *a day of wrath.*

It is called *a day of revelation*: and so it will be in every view we take of it. There will be a revelation of God, in the wisdom of his plans, in his mercy to his people, in his justice of the punishment of the wicked. There will be a revelation of Jesus Christ. The long-agitated question will then be finally and for ever settled. There will be no question who he is: no more shall it be doubted that he is the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. No Socinian in that day shall question his divinity: no blaspheming infidel shall deride then. He shall be revealed in power and in great glory; and it is expressly called "the day of the revelation

of Jesus Christ." There shall be at that day not only a revelation of God and of Jesus Christ, but there shall be a revelation of men. Millions of saints shall come out from their obscurity, and shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Millions of flaming but hypocritical professors shall stand at that day unmasked. Silent and unheeded goodness shall be brought to light; secret and enormous wickedness shall be exposed. Oh, the deeds that shall then be brought to light! Oh, the secrets that shall be made manifest in the day of revelation! God grant, my hearers, that there may come out nothing in that day that shall fill you and me with dismay! God grant that we may have nothing to be brought from behind the veil of secrecy which we shall blush to hear in that awful day! There will be a revelation of secrets then—all the secrets of men's history. Sinner, thou that art now screening thyself from public gaze, carrying on thy career of iniquity behind a disguise most dexterously wrought—that mask shall serve thee nothing in the day of revelation; it shall be torn away, and thou shalt appear as thou art.

But the text speaks particularly of one kind of revelation—the revelation of *righteous judgment that shall come on the wicked.* There will be a revelation of judgment itself. The punishment of the wrath of God is now revealed partially on the page of Scripture against all-ungodliness and unrighteousness of men: but it is only a partial revelation. Ah! we must go to eternity to know the secrets of eternity. Never, Christian, will the greatness of thy felicity be revealed—never, impenitent sinner, never till the day of judgment will the greatness of thy iniquity be revealed.

But this is not all: it is the revelation of *righteous judgment*; a complete manifestation of the justice of God in the punishment of the wicked. Now we know, that terrible as the curse of the wicked will be—we know, that though there is a lake that burneth with fire and brimstone—we know, that though profane men and infidels mock at the justice of God in the punishment of the wicked—we know that God is just; and the men that mock now

shall see that it is a righteous thing with God to punish sinners. There shall be no infidels in hell: there shall none go from the judgment-seat impeaching the justice of God. Every man, however terrible his sentence, will carry with the seed of his punishment, the conviction that it is not more than his transgressions deserve. It will be manifested *before the world*. So that, while the righteous shall be honoured before the world, while the righteous shall be exalted to glory before the universe when Christ shall come to be glorified in his saints; so shall the wicked be punished before the universe: and while men admire the power and the mercy of God in the salvation of the righteous, they will admire—yes, sinner, they will *admire*—the power and the justice of that same God in thy punishment, as thou shalt sink beneath the wrath of him that dooms thee to perdition.

Next, we are to consider *the nature of the punishment*. "After thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up wrath." Whose wrath! If it were the wrath of an angel, or of an archangel, there would be something tremendous in it. But it is the wrath of God. Oh! there is something in that idea more terrible than the imagination can compass! Solomon tells us that the "wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion." But what is the wrath of a king to the wrath of God? What is the wrath of Nebuchadnezzar, with his heated fiery furnace, seven times hotter for the Hebrew martyrs that were cast in, to the wrath of God? What is the wrath of Darius, or the counsellors of Darius, and the den of hungry roaring lions, compared to the wrath of God? But, perhaps, it may be said that it is only a *taste* of his wrath—not a drinking deep of the bitter cup. The Scripture says wrath will come on the wicked to the uttermost: it will be un-mixed wrath. Now God, even in the case of the wicked, blends mercy with judgment: *then* mercy will retire; the cup will be *all vengeance*, unsweetened by *one drop* of mercy. Oh! let the impenitent consider that it is the wrath of Omnipotence, the wrath of Omniscience! It will be wrath *felt*, not merely threatened. Now

it is threatened, and the wicked sport with the threat; but *then* it will be *felt*—wrath that shall reach the spirit. *This*, *this* will be the state of the torment of the wicked in eternity. God has access to the mind; he can make his displeasure to be felt; he can rack the soul, he can torment the spirit. We are told it will be wrath inflicted to manifest the greatness of the divine power in the way of punishment. Kings sometimes give unusual solemnity to executions, to strike terror into the hearts of their enemies, and to show what stores of vengeance are at their command. The punishment of the impenitent will show God's power in the way of *wrath*.

It will be *everlasting* wrath. It is a quenchless fire, a worm that never dies. What must it be to endure the unmitigated wrath of God for a moment, for an hour, for a week, for a year, for a century, for a thousand years, for a million of ages! But if, at that distance, there should be *one* gleam of hope appearing through the vista of darkness, hell would cease to be hell; hope would spring up; and the very idea of the termination of torment would sustain the soul under it. But oh, *eternal* wrath! *Everlasting* vengeance! To look through eternity, and see no resting-place under the extremity of torture! To be obliged to cry out, How long? and to receive no answer but "*for ever!*" And after *millions of ages* have past, and the question is again asked, How long? still to receive no answer but "*for ever!*" Oh, my hearers, my hearers! you know what it is in this world to have the heaviest affliction lightened by the influence of hope, the darkest scene cheered by a ray of hope. But think, I beseech you, think of a state of suffering where hope will go out, and leave you to the bitterness of despair *for ever!*

This wrath is said to be *wrath to come*, and because it is *to come*, sinners will not believe it; because it is *to come* they think it never will come. But *do* take God's word; *do* believe it *will* come. It is perpetually drawing near. It is nearer to those who are impenitent this day than it was last Sabbath-day: it will be nearer to-morrow than it is to-day. It is com-

ing: I beseech you take warning! And then, when it does come it will be *unpitted* suffering. Divine compassion now stands by you; the Saviour stands with his grace. If he was here he would be ready to drop tears of compassion over the impenitent and unbelieving. But in the day of your punishment there will be no pity: "he will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh."—This, then, is the punishment that shall come on the wicked and impenitent.

But there is another circumstance yet to be mentioned, and that is, *the proportion of the punishment*. In the Hebrew Scriptures the idea of *hope* is set forth by treasure: we use the word generally only in reference to what we account precious; but in the Hebrew writings any thing that is accumulative is accounted treasure. Hence, we read of the *treasures of wickedness*. The expression "treasurest up wrath," seems to be put in opposition to the expression in the foregoing verse—"the riches of his goodness." What an idea! *Treasures of love! Heaps of wrath!* And you will observe, the sinner is represented as the author of his own punishment; there is nothing arbitrary, nothing capricious; he is the author of it himself. The idea conveyed is this—that there is an accumulation continually going on as long as he sins. Do let me again entreat you to think of this—that whatever an impenitent man is doing, he is heaping up wrath. He may be getting wealth, but he is treasuring up wrath. He may be getting fame, but he is treasuring up wrath. He may be forming pleasing connexions, but he is treasuring up wrath. *Every day* he is adding something to the heap. Every oath the swearer utters, there is something more gone to the heap of wrath. Every lie the liar tells, there is something more gone to the treasure of wrath. Every act of uncleanness that the lewd man commits, there is something more gone to the accumulation of wrath. Every day he lives in sin, the book of God's remembrance debits to his account. There is a weightier treasure of wrath for the impenitent to-day, than there was yesterday; there will be more to-morrow, if he continues impenitent, than there is to-day. When

he lies down at night, he is richer (if I may apply the term) in vengeance in another world, than when he arose in the morning. He is continually deepening and darkening his hell; he is continually adding to the weight of the fetters which will sink him down into the bottomless pit. It is no hyperbole, it is no forced expression, to say, that there will be multitudes who will lament in eternity that they had not been in hell sooner, before they had been permitted to go such lengths in sin. And then, as this proportion will be according to the sin committed, so it will be according to the *mercies abused and neglected*. The rich man commits greater sin than the poor man, the wise than the unlearned: they sin against more light; they abuse greater means of doing good. But of all the men with whom God will deal most severely in judgment, and in reference to whom there will be more accumulation of wrath, is the man that has lived all his days under the preaching of the gospel, and been favoured with religious advantages. The sins of the poor heathen are light compared with his; and the punishment will be light too. Every broken Sabbath adds something to the weight of wrath; every neglected sermon adds something to the weight of punishment; all the checks of conscience, all the remonstrances of friends, all the advice and prayers of parents, will be taken into account in that day, and will all tend to increase the heap of wrath.

Now, my hearers, do consider the misery that will come on the impenitent. And there is great reason to fear, to use the striking language of a distinguished American preacher—there is great reason to fear that there are many in this assembly, and listening to this discourse, who will be the subjects of deep misery to all eternity. Who they are, where they sit, what they may be thinking about, we do not know. They may be at ease; they may be flattering themselves they shall escape; that matters are safe with them; but they are hastening on to this miserable state. If we knew, said he, that there was but one such soul in this assembly, what an awful thought! If we could see



him, what an awful sight it would be! A man whom *we knew* was going to eternal misery, and would certainly endure it! Well might the whole congregation set up a bitter and a lamentable cry over him. But, alas! instead of there being only one, there are doubtless many who will remember this sermon, to all eternity, in hell. It would be a wonder if some of the congregation were not there before this year were out: and it would be no wonder if some, now in health and energy, were there before to-morrow morning. And let the impenitent heap up as long as they may, if they continue impenitent, they will soon be there: their damnation lingereth not; their destruction will come swiftly and perhaps suddenly upon them. Some, doubtless, that you once knew, and who were as likely to live as yourselves, and deserved perdition no more than yourselves, are already past hope: their agony is begun, their despairing course commenced. But you are to-night in the land of the living—in the house of God—within the reach of mercy—within the reach of hope. Oh, what would those poor, despairing, lost creatures give for one such opportunity of salvation as you enjoy this night!

And now, my hearers, what shall I say to you? Reflect, I beseech you, on your condition. Disprove the fact that you are sinners, and the subject has nothing to do with you. You may go carelessly away to-night: you may say, these terrors apply not to me; the thunders of the law roar harmless over me. But, I beseech you, consider that you *are* sinners. I do not say that any of you are profligates; I do not say that you are immoral; but I say that you have broken the law of God. You are sinners; you are under the condemnation of the law, and are in danger of perishing. Do take up that cry, "I am a lost, a miserable sinner." Then believe the threatenings of God's word denounced against sin. You must have faith—you must *believe* it. You must first believe the law, before you can believe the gospel. You must believe you are a condemned sinner, before you can believe in Christ, as a Saviour of the lost; or you can never believe to salvation. Oh, do,

then, believe the awful threatening! Is it true, or is it not true, that God has said, "*The wicked shall be turned into hell?*" Is it true, or is it not true, that Jesus Christ will say to the wicked, in the last day, "*Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?*" Is it true, or is it not true, that Jesus Christ has said, "*Their worm dieth ~~not~~—their fire is not quenched?*" Oh, if it be true, believe it! Turn from the profane men who would convert the threatenings of Scripture into matters of ridicule. Close your ear against the sceptic, who would throw a doubt on the reality of the threatenings of God's word. Will he not punish the wicked? Then why has he said it? Is there no hell? Then the Bible is a fiction—Christ was an impostor, and the apostles partakers of the delusion. Is there no hell? Then there is no heaven—no hereafter—no judgment-seat. I entreat you believe the threatenings. Oh, the madness, the *madness*—I will not give up the term, and use a milder—the *madness* of that man that spends all the time that God's mercy has given him to flee from hell, by persuading, or attempting to persuade, himself there is none! I say, *attempting* to persuade himself, for he has not done it. Is there no trembling? Is there no midnight voice, no spectral fear? Is there no palpitation of heart at the sound of the knell, or the sight of an open grave? Why tremble at death? Why that anxiety of mind to persuade yourself that there is no hell? Because in spite of all thy bravado thou fearest that there *is*. Oh, believe that there *is*! for this is the first step towards escaping it. Go home to-night believing that God is as true in his threatenings as he is true in his promises. It is yet wrath to *come*. No fearful portents are in the sky; no gloomy comet glares upon it with portentous light, from the upper regions of the atmosphere; no convulsive throes heave the ground beneath thy feet. There is mercy—Christ waits to be gracious—his blood cleanseth from all sin. To-night, *to-night* betake thyself, O sinner, to prayer! Begin *to-night*—bow thy knees *to-night*. Thy heart is hard; I know it.

But there is one that can soften it. Thou canst not repent! Thou *must* repent; and Christ has been exalted to his throne to give repentance as well as remission of sins. *To-night, begin to-night*: trifle no longer; come to a parley. Thou art not happy: thou canst not be. There is conflict in thy bosom; there are warning voices thou must hear, and checks thou must feel. Oh, come, come to the Saviour! Except thou repent, thou wilt perish; and believing in Christ thou must be saved. But if, after this invitation, thou continuest still impenitent and unbelieving, the hour is at hand, when thou wilt curse the day of thy birth—when thou wilt curse the hour in which thou didst ever hear a gospel sermon; but chief of all thou wilt curse thine own folly, under all the poignancy of remorse, for neglecting the invitations of mercy, and continuing in sin. God in mercy preserve thee from this misery, which is now as inconceivable, as when it comes it will be intolerable! Amen.

#### THE PULPIT GALLERY.

NO. IV.

##### BISHOP LATIMER.

HUGH LATIMER was born in the year 1470; when fourteen years old he was sent to Cambridge—at the usual time he took his degrees in arts, and entering into priest's orders, was remarkably zealous in defence of popery. By the influence and exertions of Mr. Thomas Bilney who favoured the reformation, Mr. Latimer was led to examine the corrupt features of the Romish church, and at the age of fifty-three, became a decided protestant, and was as active in supporting and propagating the reformed doctrine, as he was before in efforts to destroy it. He, more than any other man promoted the reformation by his preaching. The straight forward honesty of his remarks, the liveliness of his illustrations, his homely wit, his racy manner, his manly freedom, the playful-

ness of his temper, the simplicity of his heart, the sincerity of his understanding, gave life and vigour to his sermons when they were delivered, and render them now the most amusing productions of that age, and, to us, perhaps the most valuable. As a *faithful* court preacher he excelled. "Bishop Latimer, having preached a sermon before Henry VIII. in which he touched on some topics displeasing to his majesty, was commanded to preach again the following Sunday, and to introduce an apology for the offence he had given. After naming his text, the Bishop thus commenced his sermon:—Hugh Latimer, dost thou know to whom thou art this day to speak? To the high and mighty monarch, the king's most excellent majesty, who can take away thy life if thou offendest; therefore, take heed that thou speakest not that which may displease. But then, consider well, Hugh Latimer, dost thou not know from *whence* thou comest, and upon *whose* message thou art sent? Even by the GREAT God, who is all-present, and beholdeth all thy ways; who is omnipotent, and able to cast both *body* and *soul* into hell together; therefore, take heed, and deliver thy message faithfully."

"He then proceeded with the *same* sermon he had preached the preceding Sunday, and confirmed it with redoubled energy. The sermon being ended, the court was full of expectation to know the *fate* of this honest, plain dealing Bishop. After the dinner the king called Latimer, and, with a stern countenance, asked him how he durst be so bold as to preach in this manner? Falling on his knees, Latimer replied, 'That his duty to his God, and to his prince, had enforced him thereunto; that he had merely discharged his office and conscience in what he had spoken, though his life was in his majesty's hands.' The king raised the worthy prelate from his knees, embraced him, and exclaimed, 'Blessed be God that I have so honest a servant!'"

He died at the stake, with Bishop Ridley, October 15, 1555.

## SERMON IX.

### THE BEGINNING, PROGRESS, AND END OF SIN, OR THE HISTORY OF TRANSGRESSION.

BY THE REV. T. EAST

OF BIRMINGHAM.

*"Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."*—James i. 15.

THAT the general state of society in this kingdom is becoming more and more alarming, is generally acknowledged. If we go among the lower or the higher orders; if we associate with the young or the aged, the rich or the poor, we find ourselves approaching a considerable degree of moral corruption. Public morality is no longer a fine, vigorous, blooming tree; but it is smitten, and its health is gradually falling away. We employ our parental and ministerial influence to ward off the impending evil, yet one after another is brought to ruin. If the course were as honourable as it is disreputable;—if it led to peace as it does to misery; we need not wonder at its influence on the heart. But when we consider its awful tendency, we are astonished and affected to see what it has done, and is doing, among the race of man. Those who have advanced far in this course, corrupt and corrupting, frequently attribute all the evil to the Author of all good. But, "let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

In calling your attention to this subject, I propose to consider *the beginning, the progress, and the end of sin, in the history and experience of the transgressor.*

#### First. THE BEGINNING OF SIN.

"*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.*" This is the source of all evil: from hence all evil takes its origin. Before the act can be committed, the purpose must be formed in the breast; which takes time, design, deliberation. Seduction, theft, perfidy, drunkenness, injustice, murder, the popular vices of the day, require design, arrangement, decision. Lust must be conceived before the act can be performed.

There is *the seducer!* His victim is not dragged to the altar at once:—no;—he must form a thousand artifices, he must lay innumerable plans, he must make new professions, &c. And "lust when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin."

There is *the thief!* He sees what he wants, or knows where he can get it. He forms and arranges plans with his companion. The place, the time, the circumstances are agreed upon. They go forth, and "lust when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin."

There is *the perfidious!* The man who is in possession of all the secrets which have been committed to him by his friend, and goes about to betray him. It is true, the fear of reproach and disgrace keeps him back from his purpose for a time; but actuated by lust he goes forth, and at once sacrifices his friend, and his own honour. Thus "lust when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin."

Mark the drunkard! How cautiously he puts the cup to his lips! He tastes the liquor, and professes to dislike what has overcome thousands. He tastes again,—and again,—and again:—the habit is established. Regardless of his own happiness, of the happiness of home, of the happiness of those he has sworn to protect, he indulges in it habitually. “Lust when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin.”

See the artful, envenoming man! How he entangles his victim till he has got his property within his grasp. And how does he act? Alas! he who in youth would not touch any thing which was not his own, by having it in his power, wishes to possess it, and at length, ruins another, while he dishonours himself. Thus “lust when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin.”

Observe the murderer! This crime is very rarely committed but after cautious plans. Here are two individuals; suddenly they quarrel, and the life of one is sacrificed to the other. This is dreadful;—but it is nothing compared with *deliberate* murder. The murderer, in this case, fixes on time, on place, has the weapons in his own hands, &c. O how dreadful! The sun rises and sets as usual, but for the last time as it respects the unfortunate victim! He retires, perhaps, to rest; he hears the footsteps of one he knows not; and, ere he can inform himself, he falls to rise no more! “Lust when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin.” Notice,

*Secondly.* THE PROGRESS WHICH IT MAKES IN ITS INFLUENCE OVER THE HEART AND CHARACTER OF MAN.

All who have studied human nature with the Scripture in their hands, must confess that no man becomes suddenly wicked. God has made man naturally covet the welfare of those on whom his welfare depends. Efforts are therefore employed to make them wise, and virtuous, and good. Parents who are themselves corrupt are generally anxious that their children should be virtuous and religious. I once knew a *swearer* who suddenly abandoned the practice. Why? was it because God commanded him not

to swear? No;—he cared not for God!—was it because it was dishonourable? No;—for this he cared not!—But he heard *his child* swear! he turned pale, and he abandoned the practice. If, then, there is this anxiety to make men wise and good, it is evident that evil must have its preparatory course before it can be perfected.—Let us consider,

1. *The causes brought into operation to produce this.*—One is

THE POPULAR READING OF THE AGE. This is denominated a *reading age*. If we have not now many giants of literature, there is yet much intelligence diffused throughout all classes of society. By means of the National, the Lancastrian, and other schools, an appetite for knowledge is excited;—and it is likely to be supplied. But, alas! alas! the press of Britain teems with publications which are calculated to do immense mischief. The author is a sceptic;—he aims to throw down the barriers of virtue;—he exhibits vice in the most pleasing colours; he throws much wit, skill, and address, into the character of his hero. And while the young man takes it up to pass away a leisure hour, he imbibes the scepticism it contains; and if he does not actually rise a sceptic, he is, at least, prepared to become one.

ASSOCIATIONS, also, are a cause. Associations with those who have made some advances in vice. A young person who has had something like a pious education, feels respect for goodness and for good men. He regards the Sabbath, and the means of instruction; he is often deeply and powerfully impressed by the terrors or the glories of the world to come. But let him go abroad into company, and if he be not *instantaneously disgusted*, as virtue would be if surrounded by the vices,—his ruin, if not sudden, is *inevitable*. Relaxation is necessary after the labours of the day: evening parties are formed: some place is chosen where they may spend their time together. And what is the name of that place? How is it situated? Where does it rear its head? Where stands its base? Shall we call it the TAVERN!—you have hit the name And then CARDS are introduced!—“Well,

sir! and do you forbid cards!—And would you abolish places of innocent resort!—Yes, sir! I do, sir!—As I would not let my child touch a jewel, if it had been on the finger of a man infected with the plague; so I would not suffer that which may end in an association with devils and damned spirits! It is the fruitful source of almost every evil.

The THEATRE is another cause. Though its interests are advocated by some *semi-Christians*, and even from the *pulpit* of the present day. It is often said of these places, (*where some Christians go BEFORE family prayer!*) that they are schools to mend the genius, and exalt the heart;—that there the vices are portrayed in all their hideous characters, and the virtues attired in all their beauty, more captivating even than they appear in real life;—that there they learn to speak elegantly and correctly, &c. Sometime ago, I called to see a mother; she was in distress; she not merely wept, but wept aloud. “What is the matter!”—“O my child!”—and she wept again. “O my child is just committed to prison!” and she wept again. “O my child is just committed to prison, and I fear he will never return to his father’s house!” and then she wept again; and with all my firmness I could not forbear weeping too. I was afraid to ask the cause; I did not need; for she cried, “O that THEATRE! he was a virtuous, kind youth, till that theatre proved his ruin!”—This was her testimony, and it was the testimony of the young man himself.—Now, if all persons who attend these places loved home, and respected the conjugal character, and cultivated domestic order, we might wonder at such a catastrophe. But no; there is no domestic order, there is no morality.—It was but the other day that a bird of the air, or something else, whispered in my ear to put this question to such persons:—Do you go *before prayer* or *after*? If after, how do you frame your petitions!—O you forget it altogether that night!—O tell me, young man, tell me honestly, if these things have not an influence on your heart. You once prayed, but you do not now. You once read your Bible; but you do not now.

You once thought, but you do not now. Pardon me; I sometimes mistake, even in the pulpit; you *do* think; but with what pain!

2. *Let me show how these principles advance.* “When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” No man can become suddenly wicked. At first there must be awful violence done to the conscience. When the child of religious parents first steps over the line which separates good from evil, conscience condemns, conscience alarms:—the book is closed with disgust and thrown at the feet—companions are forsaken—and he breaks away from the charm which is about to overcome his better principles and his finer taste. Yes! it is hard work to force himself into the circle of damnation. Here is conscience with its reproaches—here is the recollection of his father’s prayers, and his mother’s tears—here is the appalling dream by night, and here is the waking reality of the morning—here is God—here is the devil—here is hell with all its terrors, and heaven with all its glories! But when you have once gone into this moral contamination; when you cast off the fear of man, no one is astonished, because previously to this you have cast off the fear of God. And when you glory in your shame; and when you take a letter from your mother, and turning hastily to the part which informs you of the health of the family, throw it away, and say to your associates, “Well! I have had another lecture from my mother, *but I have disregarded it!*”—when you can drag yourself for half an hour to hear a minister to whom you have been accustomed, that you may hold him up to ridicule; then—then—then let me tell you, you may sin with comparative ease! It was difficult at the first, but now, now you may go on and take your rest. God may not awake to vengeance; but the state of that individual is most alarming, of whom he has said, “LET HIM ALONE!” Conscience, let him alone!—Visions of the night, cease to scare him with your awful forms!—Instances of goodness, charm him no more!—Appalling effects of vice, cease to alarm him! O yes! you

may then bless the triumphs of your new notions; you may then hail the effects of the principles you have embraced! But believe me, believe me, there is an end coming! "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Notice, therefore,

*Thirdly. THE END OF SIN.*

"Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." If I were to consult my taste, and the predominant feelings of my own heart, I should proceed to describe the end of the good man: which is peace. I am not so injured to danger, as to laugh at the storm; no, I would rather go into the calm than into the tempest; no, I would rather go into "the chamber where the good man meets his end," and "mark the upright man, whose end is peace." The apostle said on one occasion, "I am in a strait betwixt two;" and on this occasion I feel perplexity. How shall I decide? Shall I proceed according to my usual custom, and having announced my plan, abide by it?—I will. "Sin, when it is finished, *bringeth forth death.*" *First, the death of the body. Secondly, the death of the soul.* Both must die:—but there will be this extraordinary peculiarity connected with the soul, that it will be dying without ever being extinct; that it will ever be living in misery, and ever under the sentence of condemnation! "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth,"

1. *The death of the body.* The awful sentence denounced against sin was, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." And this sentence, with two exceptions, has been executed on all that have lived. "Death has passed upon all men, for all have sinned." This sentence, indeed, stands recorded against the saints of God, as well as against the most malignant transgressor. But there is a natural tendency in sin, to hasten this end. I have lately read an account of some persons who chose to spend the Sabbath on the water. The party went out in a boat, the boat upset, and most of them perished! O what a transition! What an illustration of the text! Lust conceived the idea of violating a Sabbath,

sin caused the purpose to be executed, and when finished, it ended in the death of most of the party! O how does sin subject its devotees to dreadful accidents, and to alarming diseases! I read in my Bible, "bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days." The glutton, the intemperate, the lascivious person, the debauchee, all these men shorten their days. And why is this? Do they want to be damned before their time?—Why? Do they wish to hasten to the judgment-seat? They sin against their own selves, becoming rotten in crime, and by awful strides they force their passage to the flames. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." If I chose to-night to proceed, I could exhibit before you the emaciated state of the body, and the rapid influence of disease to produce this effect;—but the time tells me that I must advance. Sin bringeth,

2. *The death of the soul.* And what is that?—I cannot tell. What is it for a soul to die?—I cannot tell. What is it for a soul to die eternally?—I cannot tell. There are some facts, I believe, which I cannot describe: there are some truths to which I assent, that I cannot explain. One ministerial qualification I do not possess;—I do not know, I do not want to know, I had rather sink down into the grave without knowing, how to describe the feelings of a soul as it passes from the body. I do not want to know the feelings of a condemned soul as it passes through the valley of the shadow of death. I do not want to know how a soul condemned feels, as it enters the regions of the lost! When a little boy, I went out with my father; he was busily employed, and I was lost. I can remember something of my emotions: I burst into tears; I asked several persons, "Where is my father?" And I shall never forget the emotions of my mind when my eye again caught a glimpse of my father! And why do I mention this? Because I am not aware that I can employ an illustration more natural. When you are condemned, when you are banished from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, you will find yourselves lost! But you will not be permitted the

consolation of asking, "Where is my Father?" The answer will be, "He is there, in heaven;—he is your JUDGE, he has banished you, justly disdaining to admit you into his presence for ever!"—"THEN WHEN LUST HATH CONCEIVED, IT BRINGETH FORTH SIN; AND SIN, WHEN IT IS FINISHED, BRINGETH FORTH DEATH."

The consequences of transgression which extend themselves into the eternal world, as far exceed the powers of conception, as the eternal state of the happy. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man," what God hath reserved for them that sin against him!

1. *Allow me to make an appeal to those who are invested with parental authority.* Beware, lest by connivance, and withholding due restraint, you become accessories to the ruin of your children. I give it as my decided opinion, that many parents may trace up the ruin of their children, to a lax system of domestic government. Therefore, my friends, while I would not have you become domestic tyrants, I wish you to exercise due discipline. And endeavour to make home your children's happiest place. Let fathers and mothers live in harmony and peace, and you will find your reward in the virtue, if not in the religion, of your children.

2. *Let me warn the young against the danger of yielding to the first temptation.* "I think, notwithstanding all that you have said to-night; and what our venerable friend Mr. Wilkes says from time to time; and what the departed Hyatt so often said; I think that I have strength enough to resist temptation. I have no doubt but I may just look at the world, and taste of its pleasures, without being overcome." Indeed!—Then I suppose you have acted on this persuasion!—Then I suppose you did it slyly!—Then I suppose when you asked the other night to spend an hour or two with a friend, you went to VAUXHALL, or to SADLER'S WELLS! Well then; let me ask you a question. Did you meet the eye of your parent as formerly? Did you join the family circle as usual? Did you sleep as soundly as before? Ah, my friend!—STOP, ere thou art ruined!—STOP, ere

thou art fallen lower than the lowest!—STOP at once!—STOP instantaneously!—If sinners entice you to go where you have promised, and where you have been before! consent not. Let them laugh as they may; go not;—yield not to be damned for compliment. "*If sinners entice thee, consent thou not.*" If you will not believe me, believe what God says, "THEN WHEN LUST HATH CONCEIVED, IT BRINGETH FORTH SIN; AND SIN, WHEN IT IS FINISHED, BRINGETH FORTH DEATH." My dear, dear known or unknown friend or brother, possessing with myself a depraved nature, exposed to snares most insinuating and destructive, let me beseech you, when you retire from the tabernacle to-night, pray to be kept from the evil that is in the world. But besides prayer, do one thing as most effective to resist temptation, and to purify the heart;—apply to the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved through faith in his most precious blood. Till you do this, you will strive against the power of sin in vain.

Your time is gone. If I had consulted my own convenience, I should have dismissed the congregation before. But I will trespass still longer to say, "THIS IS A FAITHFUL SAYING, AND WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTATION, THAT JESUS CHRIST CAME INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS, EVEN THE CHIEF." Look by faith to the efficacy of his death, and then you will have a power to resist evil, while its influence will cleanse you from all impure associations, and make you "PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE."

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### THE PULPIT GALLERY.

NO. V.

THE REV. TIMOTHY EAST,  
*Birmingham.*

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I love a plain serious preacher, who speaks for my sake, and not for his own; who seeks my salvation, and not his own vain glory.

FENKELON.

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MR. EAST preaches to a respectable independent congregation at Birmingham, and also visits London every year as one of the Tabernacle preachers, where his

sermons and labours are valued and approved.

He is the reputed author of the *Evangelical Rambler*, a series of papers so called, and which are written to enforce the practice of pure and undefiled religion. They were republished in this country, with some slight alterations, by the late venerated and pious Dr. Bedell, and have had a considerable circulation. Although there is not in them that depth of thought, and profound knowledge of human nature, which distinguish the essays of Johnson, yet they display considerable power of observation, and many of the sketches of characters and scenes evince a great felicity of illustration and talent for easy narrative.

As a preacher Mr. East is variable—some of his sermons are very excellent, and even eloquent; others are said to be “flat, stale, and uninteresting.” At times he gives a degree of energy to his statements which commands breathless attention, and few men are equally successful in making a deep impression by the delivery of a few sentences. When this is the case his voice is full and solemn, his action appropriate, and his whole manner strikingly illustrative of his zeal to win souls.

#### HUME'S ACCOUNT OF WHITFIELD'S PREACHING.

An intimate friend of the infidel Hume, asked what he thought of Mr. Whitfield's preaching; for he had listened to the latter part of one of his sermons at Edinburgh. “He is, sir,” said Mr. Hume, “the most ingenious preacher I ever heard. It is worth while to go twenty miles to hear him.” He then repeated a passage towards the close of that discourse which he heard. “After a solemn pause, he thus addressed his numerous audience:—‘The attendant angel is just about to leave the threshold, and ascend to heaven. And shall he ascend and not bear with him the news of one sinner, among all this multitude, reclaimed from the errors of his ways?’”

“To give the greater effect to this exclamation, he stamped with his foot, lifted up his hands and eyes to heaven, and with gushing tears, cried aloud,

‘Stop, Gabriel, stop, Gabriel! Stop ere you enter the sacred portals, and yet carry with you the news of one sinner converted to God.’ He then, in the most simple, but energetic language, described what he called a Saviour's dying love to sinful men; so that almost the whole assembly melted into tears. This address was accompanied with such animated yet natural action, that it surpassed anything I ever saw or heard in any other preacher.” Happy for the church would it be if all its ministers were so heartily engaged in their work as to feel for souls as Whitfield did!

#### PREACH CHRIST.

Our hearers need only examine how we preach Christ, to form an idea how far we are evangelical. Shall we glory in the beauty of our composition—in the flowers of rhetoric—in the force of oratory—in the harmony of periods—and leave the cross out as *unfashionable*? Thus did not Paul.—Shall we glory in the teachings—in the example of Christ—and not in the cross of Christ also? So did not Paul. See! he is going into Greece, the eye of the world—and what did he do? “I determined not to know any thing among you, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” He is going to Rome, the imperial city—among sages, generals, poets, legislators, and statesmen. Will he not there change his theme? Will he not there talk of the “Supreme being—eternal providence,—destiny,” &c.? No. “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile.” And when he heard that the Galatians were about to conceal the cross, O what were his feelings! They were about to blot the sun out of the firmament, and what would they have left but darkness, desolation, and death! The cross of Christ is the grand luminary of the gospel system, from which all its parts derive light, life, and influence. All else is darkness; and God forbid that we should glory in earth or in heaven, in life or in death, save in Christ our crucified Lord!—*Rev. Robert Newton.*



## SERMON X.

PREACHED AT THE PRIMARY VISITATION OF THE BISHOP OF LONDON.

BY THE REV. CHARLES WEBB LE BAS,

RECTOR OF ST. PAUL'S, SHADWELL.

*"He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."—Matt. vii. 29.*

THE first sight of the contrast here presented to us might appear somewhat remarkable and strange. The scribes, it might be said, and the doctors, and the wise men of Israel, taught as having authority. They sat in the chair of Moses; they seized upon the key of knowledge; and when obscure and humble men dared, for an instant, to question their judgment, they were always ready to turn upon them and to ask, "Dost thou teach us?" And thus, it may be thought, we too, teach with authority. A prophet could scarcely exact obedience with an air of loftier command; nay, many a prophet was received with far less honour than these masters of Israel. Jerusalem, we know, paid implicit obedience to the accents of her scribes and her doctors, but "she stoned the prophets, and slew them that were sent unto her."

In order, then, to enter into the spirit of this contrast, we must remember, that if the scribes spoke as with authority, their authority was not their *own* but *borrowed* from the great names that went before them. It belonged not to their present chair, nor to their office, but rested upon the learning or wisdom of ancient days. The school would be deaf to the words of the scribes, if they spoke not of the traditions of the fathers, and the maxims of the sages of old. Even the light of the synagogue, the illustrious Illel himself, as we are told, might teach wisely and learnedly, but he taught wholly in vain, unless he upheld the doctrines he advanced by adding, "Thus

saith the *tradition*, I have heard it from men whose praise and whose glory are in Israel." Not so the teacher of Nazareth. The language of the scribes was, Thus said the *men* of ancient days; but the language of the son of Mary was, "Verily, verily, I say unto you;" and men were filled with amazement, that one reared amid the care and the toil of an obscure craft, should come forth and teach them with that authority which neither scribe nor prophet had ever taken to himself; and who told them that if they did *his* sayings, they should build upon a rock; and that if they did them not, they should build upon the sand, and be at the mercy of the tempest and the flood. When they heard these words their souls were bowed down, as it were, with the hidden majesty which might not be withstood, and the people were lost in wonder at the thought, that virtue and power should go forth from the lips of one who had never approached the schools of the wise, and of the scribes, and of the disputers of this world.

At length the King of glory threw off the fashion of a servant, and ascended up on high, and sent down gifts for the unthankful and the rebellious; and "he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints; for the work of the ministry; for the edifying of the body of Christ." How did these fulfil their ministry? Did they call up the wisdom of former days to avouch the truth of their sayings?

Did they lean for support upon the strength of the schools or of the synagogues? Did they fly for aid to the decrees of the doctors or of the sages, while they were delivering the oracles of heaven—the words of eternal life? Did they not, like their divine Master, speak with authority? Did they not speak like men who were conscious that their authority was delegated to them from Christ? And what was the effect? Why, they went forth, the people strengthening their hands, and they confounded the wisdom of man, by that simplicity and foolishness of preaching which moved the scorn of the Greek, and excited the hatred of the Jew; but which, in truth, was the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Apostles, and prophets, and evangelists, are now no more; but pastors and teachers have always been left to the church in their several orders and degrees. In what manner have they discharged their sacred office to the souls of men? Have they always spoken as with *authority*? Have they always spoken as men having less to do with flesh and blood than with the eternal and invisible Head of the universal church? The history of the church furnishes, on the whole, a somewhat perplexing answer to this question. For some time the church spoke with that majestic and commanding simplicity which became her celestial origin, but policy and false deceit soon conspired to make a spoil of her, and, like the first traitor, they betrayed her with a kiss. They induced her to give her glory to another than her rightful Lord, and they whispered to her that the plain word of God often spoke in a manner unworthy of the nature and the excellency of God, and that, therefore, it would tend to the divine honour if the subtlety of man were called in to unwrap the integuments which disguised its hidden wisdom. Under this treacherous discipline she became at last almost too much ashamed of the simple words of eternal life to speak them with authority; and hence it is, that if we listen to her doctrines, even before the footsteps of apostolic men were well effaced from the earth, we sometimes

may be led to doubt whether Christ or Plato were the master.

Let us pass onward to darker times. The season was advancing when the splendours of truth were overshadowed by a still more disastrous eclipse; for while Plato held and defended the empire of Christ, Aristotle, it may be said, for ages usurped the supremacy over the church. It is not my purpose to cast presumptuous disparagements on the stupendous labours which established and maintained the dominion of the schools (for the toil of a whole life would scarcely suffice to estimate rightly and duly those prejudices of subtlety;) but when we survey the gigantic appeals to the law which they for centuries were heaping up—when we think of the weariness and the painfulness to which they condemned the spirits of men, and when we reflect that the way of life was not so much a steep and narrow path as a dark and bewildering labyrinth; when we think on these things do they not force one question upon us? Do they not impel us to ask, Can these be the works of men who are the disciples of him that spoke with authority and not as the scribes? Can these be the works of men devoted to the pure, serene, omnipotent wisdom that came forth from God and returned to God—of that truth which confounded the great and the wise, but proclaimed comfort to the poor and liberty to the captive? Can these be the works of men who were followers of him that came to make a high way for our God, “wherein the way-faring man and the simple should not go astray?”

But this is not all, nor is it the worst. If Plato were seated by the side of Christ, and if Aristotle well nigh thrust him from his throne, what shall we say of him who clothed himself with the name and title of Jesus, and yet plucked out the heart of “the truth as it is in Jesus?” What shall we say of him, who when God had said, “Ye shall not eat of it nor touch it, lest ye die,” dared nevertheless to say, “Ye shall not surely die?” Think, I would beseech you, for a moment, of the sermon on the mount, in which we have words spoken with authority; words

which mere man never spake; words which come home to the heart, and bring it into captivity; and then think of the mystery of iniquity which grew up into deadly strength in that fatal school which beguiled the souls of men from the simplicity that is in Christ. You will then see what it is to desert the artless style of confidence and of authority in proclaiming the oracles of God. You will then perceive the difference between the sayings of one who spake to the world those things only which he heard from the Father, and the sayings of them who took counsel of the devices and of the desires of man's crafty heart. You will thus discern between the power and wisdom which binds the strong man, and which spoils him of the armour wherein he trusted, and the ignominious craft which parleys with the strong man, and which enters into stipulations with him, till he has time to collect his might, to turn upon his adversary, and to lead him captive according to his will. With authority from heaven the Saviour declared, that better were it to enter into life halt and maimed, than to be cast whole into hell fire. With the subtlety that became the father of lies, the disciples of Leo have told us that we may well enter into life with whole and proper limbs, and not only so, but that we may carry thither the adulterous eye, and the voluptuous heart, and the hand that worketh iniquity, and the feet that are swift to shed innocent blood. It was thus that they belied the Lord, and turned his truth into a lie. How did they effect this? How, but because they were unfaithful to the majesty of the divine word, and condemned the speaking of it in simplicity and with authority. Hence it was that in their hands it became a medium through which the lusts of men might be accompanied with serpentine craft, and whereby they might, as it were, fall away from the grasp of God's eternal and undefiled law. Hence it was that the schools of divine wisdom were converted into secret chambers, where each man offered incense to the abominations of his heart, and learned to believe that there might be concord between Christ and Belial. The time

would fail were we to attempt to describe the evils that crept into the chair of learning, when once a breach was made in the bulwark of authority which our preaching derives from the example and dignity of Him who taught not like the scribes.

Why is it that I now invite you, my revered and honoured brethren, to meditate on the footsteps and on the dangers which have hence befallen the cause of truth? Why, but because it never can be *unseasonable* for us to call to mind the direct relationship wherein we stand towards God and man; and because such recollections never can be *more seasonable* than when we come together as a consecrated brotherhood, the ministers and stewards of the manifold mysteries of God. The occasion is one which calls upon us, with the voice of deep solemnity, to reflect that we are not the teachers of a science, but the messengers of the Lord, the ambassadors of Jesus Christ, the servants of him who taught with dignity, and power, and majesty unutterable. Our commission is not to recite the words and sentences spoken by wise and thoughtful men, but to give utterance to the oracles of heaven.

*Theology* may well indeed be called *the mistress and the queen of sciences*: for all the sciences are bound to do her homage, to bring presents unto her, to honour her with their frankincense, with their treasures, and with all their pleasant and their brightest things. All this is nothing more than a reasonable service due from the intelligent faculties of men towards her, and it should be the matter of her peace and joy. But when she speaks with her own voice, it is a voice like that which proclaims "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good will towards men"—it is a voice like that which issued from the excellent glory, and proclaimed to the world the beloved of the Father, in whom he was well pleased.

Whenever this voice calls upon us it is the duty of reason to answer and to say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." But it is not the business of reason to start forward in obedience to the call with an impetuous step, and to rush headlong into dark and perilous extremities.

It is her province, in obeying the call, to advance with measured and sober pace, lest peradventure the same voice should again be heard to say, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther: for behold thus, and thus also, *it is written*." If reason had been content thus to learn and thus to teach, what unhallowed strivings might have been spared to the church of Christ! Had this spirit of humble and holy dogmatism prevailed, where would have been the mountain loads of controversy which have so long oppressed and buried the graces of the gospel? Where would have been the mysticism which transformed the throne of religion from the heart to the imagination? Where would have been the insane presumption which ascended to heaven to unfold the volume of God's decrees, and to bring them down for man to read? Where would have been the impiety which made the eternal Son of God to sit down with Confucius and Socrates? Where would have been the strife which for ages has distracted and divided the church of Christ? Where would have been the self-sufficiency which delighted in raising a circle that spread in time to a vast circumference of devouring heresy? Where would these things have been, if the ministers of the truth had always been content simply to teach with authority what from *supreme* authority they had learnt.

I have said that the remembrance of these things can never be unseasonable, and that it never can be more seasonable than when we are gathered together at the call of our spiritual governor and father. Why is it that we are here this day, but that as iron sharpeneth iron, so may each man sharpen the countenance of his friend and brother in the Lord—that we may renew our vows, and think of the ties and bonds that are upon us, that we may gladden him who hath the care and rule over us—that by our willing obedience we may strengthen his heart and his hands in the exercise of his sacred office—that we may listen to his voice as to the voice of one whose functions number him among the angels of the church of Christ, whose province it is to guard from injury the church's doctrines,

and to see that her ministers act fully up to the genuine dignity and spirit of their calling.

Let us then, my honoured brethren, steadfastly keep in mind, that we are servants of Him that taught with authority, and that consequently our instructions in general must consist not so much of *disquisition* as of *testimony*. The spirit of our teaching should, indeed, be affectionate and mild; avoiding every thing that is dogmatical, we are to speak with that holy confidence which is derived from an entire simplicity of deference to the written word. We are to testify repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The language of doubtful disputation becomes not the prophet who is declaring the oracles of God. The language of angry controversy becomes not a sinful man when he is delivering the message of God to a fallen world; but the language which does become him is that of steadfast and serene peroration. He is warranted to say with the apostle, "We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true." What though the winds of false doctrine should be let loose from every quarter of heaven, to fight against the honour of the church—what though a feverish thirst should come, as undoubtedly it has come, upon the intellects of men, so that many a hand shall be stretched forth to the tree of knowledge while the tree of life shall be passed by—what should these signs tell us but that we are fallen upon days when the word of authority must be uttered with no faint or languid voice? If we would have it heard by the people, it must be uttered as if it came forth from a heart in which the truth of God is engrafted. It must sound like the rhapsody of the sanctuary inhabited by him that sitteth between the cherubim. We are accustomed to hear much of the perils that array themselves against the bulwarks of our Zion, but the sound of the warning should speak to us only of increased faithfulness and zeal; and it should admonish us not to pass round the

towers of our fortification to number them with pride and indolent security. It should lead us to adorn and strengthen them, so that all who look up to them may say, "This is a city whose walls are salvation, and whose gates are praise."

It is, my brethren, indeed, a cheering thought, that Christians form a royal priesthood to the whole human race, and that Christian ministers are the priesthood to this holy generation. It is always encouraging to think that Christian people are the elect of God, that the Christian clergy are the chosen of his choice, the elect of his favour. But what would all this avail if those that are invested with the sacred office of the ministry were to cease to magnify that office to which they have been consecrated. How can they better magnify that office than by showing that it is an office which hath taught their own spirits to live in perpetual communion with heaven—an office which hath taught them to glory in the things that pertain to their own infirmity, and to go forth strong and boldly, in the majesty and the power of God!

But I will cease from these words of exhortation, which it would perhaps better become me to listen to than to deliver. I stand in the presence of men who need not that we should tell them, that if the words of eternal life are to be spoken with authority, they should be uttered with lips that would seem to be touched and pervaded by the fire of the altar. I stand in the presence of men who need not to be told that nothing can so efficaciously silence the thunders of a Boanerges as the slightest suspicion among the people that faintness hath come upon the spirits of his brethren and fellow workers in the Lord. You all know well that nothing can strike the tongue of authority with so dead a palsy, as the very thought of unworthiness in them to whom the power of authority is committed. You well know that the majesty of truth herself hath not always more power than the righteousness and the sanctity of them who are called to be ministers of the truth.

One moment more, and my words are

ended. In order that the authority of divine truth may have something of omnipresence throughout the regions which profess to receive it, it hath been, as you know, the wisdom of ancient days, to separate these regions into portions and to districts, and to assign to each its peculiar and local minister. The *object* of this arrangement, of course, is manifest to the whole world. It was that the spiritual wants of men might not be cursorily or irregularly supplied, but that the living waters of salvation might be distributed through the land; that while some portions of the household of God had the bread of life, in fulness and abundance, there might not be others left to perish for lack of knowledge, and to sink under a famine of the word of God. Our establishment, therefore, naturally looks with something like distrust upon a wandering and restless piety which stretches beyond the boundaries appointed for its exercise. In the estimate of our church the voice of spiritual authority can no where be heard with such effect and blessedness as within the sphere of each man's appointed duty. It is well known to her, that something like a passion of excitement will secretly mingle itself with the holiest motives, and she is loath to leave the eternal interests of her children to principles which, perhaps, resemble the emanations of an electric element more than the steady influence of the solar light. It may be well for us to recall our thoughts occasionally to this wisdom, that hath marked out to each the limits of his ministerial usefulness. The present age is somewhat adverse to sobriety and order, and delighteth in the outpourings of an irregular and excursive energy. The church is cautious of stretching forth her hand to sanction this method, lest, perchance, evil and confusion should begin it, and it should, ultimately, cause the voice of authority to fail. Where, let me ask myself, can a minister speak the words of eternal life with such dignity and power as in the place where his worth is known and his usefulness is felt. To what shall we liken the labours of one who wanders sometimes into the territories of other men, but to a river which

breaks through its embankment, per- chance to be lost in a morass, or to waste itself in an unfruitful channel? And to what shall we compare the practice of one who gives himself entirely to his local ministry, but to a stream that glides in peace through its own channel, whose course is marked by green pastures, by valleys filled with corn, and by trees that rise up to knowledge with the increase of God.

THAT SUCH MAY BE THE FRUIT OF YOUR LABOURS, MAY GOD OF HIS INFINITE MERCY GRANT!

#### DYING REGRETS.

Oh! if the soul, when trembling on the verge of eternity, when the last fibre of the thread of life is parting, can only look backward with tormenting regret, and forward with more tormenting doubt and despair! What a state for an immortal and accountable creature to feel the torturing conviction, that he has been trifling, or worse than trifling, all his days; that he has thrown his life away on "vanity," and has nothing left as the result but "vexation of spirit;" that it is too late to make provision for the world to come, and which is just opening to him in all its darkness and all its unknown terrors; that he has finished and sealed the "senseless bargain," (oh how bitterly does he feel it to be so!) of "eternity for bubbles;" that he has bartered and damned his soul for the "pleasures of sin," and the worthless nothings of a world that has passed away from him! It is not necessary that a man should have "seen no good," or should have had "no power to enjoy" his "riches and wealth and honour" and family, in order to his feeling their emptiness in his latter end, when his soul is absorbed in one grand concern, and longs for a peace and a hope which they are incapable of imparting. Even though he had derived from them through life the whole amount of pleasure which,

without the influence of true religion, it is in their power to bestow; still it is pleasure that is gone with each passing moment, and leaves the soul at last dreadfully desolate, and unprovided for the prospect which lies before it. He has "received in his lifetime his good things," and all must be left behind him; he has lived without God, and without God he must die; his life has been faithless, and his death must be hopeless; he has laid up for himself treasures on earth, and there is no treasure reserved for him in heaven; he has said to his soul, "Thou hast goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;" and when "his soul is required of him," he feels himself "a fool;" he "came in with vanity," and he departs in darkness. It is the everlasting existence by which it is followed that stamps importance on the life of man. Should a man double the age of Methuselah, his life (though to us, with our narrow span of three-score years and ten, it might seem a little eternity) would still be vanity, if it were spent without reference to the endless duration that is beyond it.—*Dr. Wardlaw.*

#### IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER.

It is perhaps visionary to expect an unusual success of religious concerns, unless there are unusual omens. Now, a most emphatical spirit of prayer would be such an omen; and the individual who should solemnly determine to try its last possible efficacy, might probably find himself becoming a much more prevailing agent in his little sphere; and, if the whole, or the greater number of the disciples of Christianity were, with an earnest, unalterable resolution of each, to combine that heaven should not withhold one single influence, which the very utmost efforts of conspiring and persevering supplication would obtain, it would be a sign that the revolution of the world was at hand.—*Foster.*

## SERMON XI.

### CHRIST THE LIFE OF HIS PEOPLE.

BY THE REV. JABEZ BUNTING, D. D.

*Christ, our life.—Col. iii. 4.*

"WHAT think ye of Christ?" was a question once addressed by our Saviour to the unbelieving Jews, who vainly attempted to entangle him in his talk. By examining what answer *we* can in sincerity and truth return to this question, we might at once ascertain the soundness of our principles, the rectitude of our conduct, the safety of our souls. The answer which we *ought* to return is contained in the text. We ought to say, "*Christ is our life.*" Any thing in our principles, or experience, or conduct, which contradicts this grand principle is so far dangerous. There are many scriptures which go to prove the vitality which subsists between Christ and all Christians. Sometimes, to represent the nearness of this union, it is illustrated by that which subsists between the *vine* and the *branches*, and then we learn that Christians are grafted into Christ, and so enabled to bear fruit to him. Sometimes the figure of a *foundation* is employed—the foundation which God has laid in Zion; and then his people are represented as *living stones*, consecrated unto God by him, and then growing up into a holy temple in the Lord. Sometimes Christ is spoken of as the *head*, and then Christians are instructed that

"They life and strength from him derive,  
And by him move, and in him live."

But in the text this doctrine is stated in terms yet more emphatic. "Christ is"—what? Every thing. You cannot be Christians, you can perform none of its duties, enjoy none of its recompenses, but in proportion as "Christ is *your life*."

It is not said merely that he lives *in us* or that we live *by* him or *through* him; but to make the subject more instructive and emphatic, the apostle says, "*CHRIST IS OUR LIFE.*" Let us apply this sentiment,

*First, To THE RELATIVE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN*—his life of *pardon* and *justification*. We are all naturally dead in law, that is, our natural state is that of guilt and transgression, one in which the law has already pronounced us dead. For, as the body without the soul is dead, so the soul that is destitute of the life and favour of God, is spiritually dead—dead to all the purposes for which it was made. This sentence the law pronounces against all sinners. If this is *our* state, we are as good as dead; we *are* doomed to death, and there remains only the execution of the sentence to complete our misery. In this state Christ finds us all, and undertakes to become "*our life*." When the soul is truly awakened, the first inquiry is, "What must I do to be saved?" One of the most important inquiries which can possibly be presented is, "How shall man be just with God?" The Scripture simply and plainly says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." It tells us, that he "himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" that "all we like sheep had gone astray," but that the Lord laid on him, Christ, "the iniquities of us all." And there was such infinite merit in his obedience unto the death of the cross, that God, though just, is ready to become a Saviour. It is not *by works of law* that we are thus saved, restored; to render this possible,

the law would require absolute, perfect, unbroken obedience. Nor is it merely by *repentance* that we are restored to favour. Repentance, indeed, is highly becoming our situation. It is quite proper that sinners should be sensible of the enormity of their conduct, and that they should confess and forsake it fully and for ever; but repentance cannot atone for sin; the atonement is to be found in the sacrifice of Christ, and that alone. In order that we may be justified, this atonement must be laid hold on, and it is thus laid hold on *by faith*. We are justified, however, by faith only *instrumentally*; by Christ Jesus, *meritoriously*; because he is the object on which our faith relies. It is remarkable how strong the Scriptures are on this point: whatever view they take of the blessing itself, they always recognise Jesus Christ as the *author* of the blessing; they always direct us to Jesus Christ as the mediator through whom the blessing flows. Sometimes this blessing is spoken of as a release from the curse of the law; and then we are told, that "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us;" for it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Sometimes it is spoken of as including deliverance from wrath, and then they are careful to tell us that it is "Jesus who delivereth us from the wrath to come." Sometimes it is represented as the remission of a penalty incurred, and then they say, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission;" but "Christ shed his blood as a remission for the sins of many." They sometimes speak of this blessing under the notion of acceptance into the favour and family of God; but they are sure to tell us that we are accepted thus in Christ the beloved. They speak of it as an admission to a state of security in opposition to a state of danger; but they represent this as enjoyed only by fleeing for refuge, to lay hold on Christ, the hope set before them in the gospel. Thus, whatever view they give us of this grand blessing, we perceive that they never overlook this truth, that Christ is the source of all. Thus Christ is our *relative* life. But we apply the sentiment,

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*Secondly, TO THE CHRISTIAN'S ACTUAL LIFE OF SANCTIFICATION AND HOLINESS.* For our death by sin is not only a death in law, but a true and proper alienation from him who is the life of all his intelligent creatures. Sin has not only exposed us to future misery: the dreadful punishment is already begun—the present state is deeply affected by it. Though we are not shut out from all hope, yet we are shut out from actual communion with God, and so from holiness. There must, therefore, be a restoration to purity; for this, also, we are indebted to Christ: his death is the *cause* of our sanctification: Jesus Christ gave himself for us that he might have a *right* to purify us. We were Satan's *lawful* captives; for we had sold ourselves to him; and till Christ bought us out, we were not properly rescued from his dominion. The death of Christ is the power by which he sets us free; and, as his death is the *cause*, so his Spirit is the *agent*; and he is emphatically called the Spirit of Holiness. His word is the *instrument* of our sanctification—"I am made clean *by thy word*"—"Of his own will begat he us with *the word of truth*." The purity of Christ is the *model* and *rule* of our sanctification. He is the great pattern to which we are to be conformed. The Holy Spirit works according to this great exemplar. He sets before him the purity of the Saviour; and his aim, so to speak, is to make us like Christ; that as he was, so we may be in the world, and that we may be able to walk as he also walked. O what a high and glorious calling is the Christian's! How much more sublime than the standard which the men of the world generally propose!

We are purified in proportion as we believe in Jesus Christ; not by poring over our own corruptions—not by contemplating our own weakness, but by looking unto Jesus; by depending upon him to restore us to his own image—to prepare us for his service upon earth—to fit us for his glory in heaven.

But Jesus Christ is the life of our sanctification, not only as it respects the way by which we are made holy, but as it respects holiness in the detail. He is the

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life of all Christian graces—of all Christian duties—of all Christian ordinances.

1. Jesus Christ is *the life of all Christian graces*. These all proceed from Christ, and tend to Christ, and determine on Christ. They have all a value in proportion as they are connected with Christ, and bring us, at every turn, into contact with Christ. **FAITH**—Christ is the life of this grace. How can it possibly exist, if it have not Christ to rest on? Faith cannot rest on peaceful or joyous feelings—on regular and consistent conduct; these are all the *fruits* of faith, not the foundation. Faith gives life to good works—to holy tempers—to joyful affections; but Christ must first be the life of faith; then, and then only, faith gives energy to all the fruits of faith. Faith is called looking to an object; the object of faith is Christ. Faith is called the reception of a gift; that gift is Christ, and with him all good. **HOPE**—Christ is the life of hope. If we have hope, it is because we are quickened together with him. Our anchor is cast within the veil, and it is both sure and steadfast; but if Jesus, our forerunner, had not entered there first for us, all attempts to cast our anchor there had been altogether in vain. **LOVE**—Jesus Christ is the object of supreme regard to every genuine Christian; so it has been in all ages, however dim the light the individuals may have enjoyed. Yet, in proportion to the degree of knowledge which they possessed, they rejoiced in Christ. Simeon, when he embraced the Saviour, seemed to be fully satisfied with life; he had no remaining wish as to this world, and he said, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” Paul, you well know, counted all things but loss for Christ; and was ready to suffer the loss of all things, if he might but win Christ, in winning whom he thought he had won all. Christ was the life and soul of the joy of these ancient saints.\*

2. Jesus Christ is *the life of all Christian duties*. This is another important branch of practical godliness. But where will you find these duties attended to, spite of all the temptations and allure-

ments of the world, the flesh, and the devil, where Christ is not the life of the soul? Christians are said to “walk in newness of life;” and this new life develops itself in all the various acts of godliness. In this new life and walk is included the right management of the thoughts and tempers—the proper government of the discourse—due conduct towards God and man. Are Christians in any degree *what they ought to be*? It is because they are made like Jesus Christ. Is the Christian’s *conversation* holy, and does it minister any portion of benefit to those who hear him? It is because there is so much of Jesus Christ in it,—in what he is—in what he has done—in what he has suffered—in what he waits to do—and what he expects in gratitude to be done to and for him. Are the *actions* of the Christian holy? They are so in virtue of the power of Christ resting upon him. Christ is his life and strength; hence, all he does is directed to the glory of Christ.

3. Jesus Christ is *the life of Christian ordinances*. Christian graces will not be maintained with vigour—Christian duties will not be performed with regularity, if we do not continue to implore and enjoy the divine influence, through the medium of the various means of grace. Of all these ordinances, Christ is the life. They would be all wells without water, if he were not conveyed through them in his spiritual and comforting influences. What are **SACRAMENTS**, if Christ be not the life of them? If people are content with the outward sign, and do not seek after the thing signified, they may become the means of spiritual delusion and eternal ruin. What is *Baptism*, but a figurative representation of our moral pollution—an ordinance which brings to our very eyes this truth, that unless Christ wash us, we can have no spiritual part in him—a rite, by the observance of which, we put in our claim to be acknowledged by him, and to rejoice in the blessings of his love? What is the *Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper* without Christ? It derives all its significance and interest from its bringing us into the presence-chamber of Christ, and what is it but the communion of his body and blood?

What are PRAYERS without Christ? Is not he the chief object of the Christian's supplication, that we may be more like him—that we may have a deeper interest in him? Jesus Christ is the Great High-priest, "having the golden censer," to whom there is given "much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which is before the throne."

What are THANKSGIVINGS without Christ? Offerings which God will reject, as he rejected the sacrifice of Cain. Cain presented a thank-offering; but it was accompanied by no recognition of a Saviour—there was no blood-shedding; therefore, it was rejected. Cain's was *the religion of nature*, about which some persons make such a mighty fuss! But God rejected it. If sin be not confessed, if forgiveness and purity be not supplicated, the religion of nature is an abomination in the sight of God! The religion of sinners, the way of salvation through Christ, is the only religion that suits us. Our praises and thanksgivings will never be accepted, but as they are presented in and through Christ.

And what is PREACHING without Christ? Indeed, it is not the gospel that is preached; it is not good news, if Christ be not the subject of it. *He is the principal theme of all evangelical ministrations*—"We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus, the Lord"—we declare "the unsearchable riches of Christ." There may be a great difference as to the form in which these truths are presented; yet Christ must ever be the centre in which all the lines of truth meet. If we preach *the law*, it is to show you your need of Christ; for "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." If we preach *the torments of hell*, it is to induce you to make haste to Christ, lest those torments overtake you. If we preach *the joys of heaven*, it is to encourage you to come to Christ, that he may give you a title and a meetness for those joys. If we preach *faith*, it is a faith of which Christ is the object, the author, and the perfecter. If we preach *repentance*, it is that you may go to Christ, whom "God hath exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance

and remission of sins." If we preach *morality or holiness*, the grand elementary principle is love to Christ.

"Talk they of morals!—O thou bleeding love! The grand morality is love to Thee!"

But it is not merely because he is the principal subject of preaching which makes preaching nothing without him, but *because the very commission to preach, is derived immediately from him*. He said originally, and he still continues to say, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." To every true minister of the gospel it may be said, as it was to the first apostles, "Ye have not chosen me"—as some men choose physis, and others law, and others philosophy, and others trade—all this is quite out of place when applied to the kingdom of Christ, in which Christ claims to be actual and absolute king—"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

From Christ is derived also the *power to exercise the ministry with fruitfulness and effect*. And this is another reason why preaching is nothing without him. From him is derived all that unction which at any time accompanies our ministrations. As the clouds from which the rain descends have not that rain in themselves, but derive it from the sea and various moist places of the earth, and having thus received, are able to disperse abroad; so all the efficacy of the gospel which is preached, is derived from Jesus Christ, who is the overflowing fountain of all that is good and holy. But, "Christ is our life."

*Thirdly*, AS IT RESPECTS THE PROMISED RESURRECTION AND GLORIFICATION OF THE BODY, AND THE FINAL EXALTATION OF THE BODIES AND SOULS OF HIS PEOPLE TO ENDLESS BLESSEDNESS. Even when Christ has become our life *relatively*, as it respects our justification, and our life *really*, as it respects our sanctification, it is still an awful fact, that "the body is dead because of sin." Though when the soul is restored to spiritual life, the body becomes a temple of the Holy Ghost, it is nevertheless dead; and, so far, remains for a

time under the divine displeasure, on account of sin. This is God's badge, which he has attached to transgression. He who carries a body about with him, carries about with him a proof that the Lord is righteous, and that he will not let sin go unpunished. "The body is dead," *at present*, "because of sin;" but that same body has the assurance of life hereafter: for it is to the *whole man* that the promise of eternal life is made. Jesus Christ has promised that he will restore it to vigour and immortal youth. Christ is the author of this life,

1. *As his power is the agent to effect this.* He himself will perform this *miracle*; for it is a miracle. It is not because there remains in the body some latent principle of life to be wrought upon; Scripture contradicts this philosophic notion. They tell us plainly, that it will be a miracle—a miracle resembling that of the resurrection of Christ himself. Now, if the resurrection of Christ was a mere *vegetative* resurrection, *Christ was not really dead*, and his resurrection is no proof of his divinity. In order to prove the divinity of that operation, we must admit his real and absolute death. When the soul is separated from the body, no life remains; and no life will ever come into it, but what Christ puts into it—"who shall change our vile body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." There is, therefore, no latent principle of life to assist the operation; it is the effect of Almighty power, and that power put forth by Christ.

2. *Because his raised and glorified body will be the model to which the bodies of his people will be conformed.* "He will change our vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his own glorious body."

3. *Inasmuch as his appearance the second time in the clouds with glory will be the signal for our resurrection.* He will appear again in power and great glory, and at this his coming we shall live; we shall then all be summoned from our dusty-beds, "meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be for ever with the Lord."

In assurance of hope,  
We to Jesus look up,  
Till his banner, unfurl'd in the air,  
From our graves we shall see,  
And cry out, "It is he!"  
And fly up to acknowledge him there.

Further—*In reference to that eternal glory to which we shall finally be exalted—*Christ is the life of this also. He is "the Lord of heaven." "All power is given to him in heaven"—"Angels and principalities are made subject to him"—"he has the keys of death and of hades"—"he both died and rose again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living." As the king of heaven it is his prerogative to admit others into that world. Hence we find that the dying Stephen said, "*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*" There was no admission even for a dying martyr into heaven but through Jesus Christ. Christ must formally agree to the admission of his people before that admission can take place.

*It is his to assign to each of his saints their proper place and occupation in heaven.* "In my Father's house are many mansions: I go to *prepare a place* for you." From this it is clear that the kingdom of Christ extends to heaven; and all that is connected with the bliss and glory of heaven will be dispensed by him.

*His presence mainly constitutes the bliss of heaven.* It is by him, and through him, that all the glory of heaven is made known. All the saints will shine by a reflection of his glory: their union to Christ will be the instrument of their realizing the promised bliss; and it is through this medium alone that they can enjoy the vision of God. Paul knew this; hence he said, "I have a desire to depart and to be *with Christ*, which is far better." To be *by Christ in heaven* he esteemed to be far better than to be *in Christ on earth*, even under the most favourable circumstances.

We have good reason to think that *the degrees of heavenly glory will be regulated by the degrees of nearness and intimacy to Christ* to which we may have been previously exalted. It is true, that on this subject the Scriptures speak but little;

more by hints than in detail. But this much we may learn, that there will be degrees in glory—"One star differeth from another star in glory; so also is the resurrection of the dead." The saints, we are told, will be made like angels, and amongst these we *know* there are degrees; we read of "thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers." There is a superiority, and of course there is also a relative inferiority. The chimerical *equality* for which some so foolishly and zealously contend, in the world and in the church, has no place even in heaven. We may reasonably infer, that in proportion as we are like Christ, and near to him, we shall shine. All the stars of heaven shall shine with great lustre, but those will shine the most brightly who most resemble Christ, and who are most near to him who is the Sun of righteousness.

Thus have we illustrated and proved this great gospel axiom, that Christ is the life of his people.

1. *This subject addresses itself most powerfully to the hearers of the gospel.* We learn from it what is the design of the various exhibitions of Christ in the preaching of the gospel. Christ is preached, to the end that he may be *your life*. Preachers labour in vain, hearers listen in vain, if there be no communication of life. When a man of common understanding listens to a plain, faithful preacher, if he be not grossly inattentive, he must derive some light; his understanding must be informed. But this accession of knowledge does by no means answer the end of preaching. This ordinance is not intended to make you perfect theologians. You may be able to defend every article of the Christian faith; there may not be a speck in your orthodoxy, and yet the great end of preaching remains unaccomplished; for Christ is *life* as well as *light*. What effect has been produced by your former hearing? Has Christ become your life? Is the sentence of death reversed, or does the wrath of God still abide upon you, because you have not fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you? And has Christ become your real as well as your relative life? Do you rejoice in purity of heart? and are

you following Christ in the way of holiness? Oh! if Christ be only your light and not your *life*, you have heard and read in vain. The first thing you have to do is to come to God, and confess your wicked waste of former opportunities; you must obtain pardon for the past, before you can hope for future good. There are many who go to hell after hearing the gospel for years. It were better to go to hell from the grossest darkness of paganism, than thus turn your knowledge to no account! This hearing, this knowledge is a talent which you are required to occupy. If you neglect to improve this light, or if you resist it by the indulgence of worldly tempers, or vain and foolish conversation and conduct, it will greatly aggravate your doom that you have had light. Wo unto them who have the key of knowledge, and do not use it to open the door of truth! There are many among all our congregations, who, when the gospel is put into their hands, that they may open the door to pardon and salvation, turn the key the wrong way, and actually lock themselves out. What madness can equal this? To hear the word of life, and run on to death, without pardon, without any effort to obtain salvation! O! be careful not to make this perverted use of the gospel! Let not that bring you down to hell which was designed to raise you to heaven and holiness. *So it will be if you do not connect faith with your hearing, and if obedience do not prove the sincerity of your faith.*

2. *To earnest seekers of salvation this subject affords much encouragement.* When you think of your numerous wants, you feel shocked, and are ready to say,

"I want—alas! what want I not?"

You want pardon—you want purity—you want strength—you want a lively hope of glory—and *all this is in Christ*. Secure Christ for your life, and you will have all. And Christ is every sinner's right; Christ is God's gift to the world—the world which was the object of his pity, shared the effects of his pity. Christ is therefore *every sinner's right*; and if you receive him, you have all that can

conduce to your present safety and eternal life. Be careful that you use Christ for all the purposes for which he is offered to you.

3. *Let Christians learn a lesson from this subject.* **BE GRATEFUL.** You see how much you owe to him; you cannot be Christians without him. He gave you life, but he gave it you at a great cost! It is by his stripes that you are healed—he *died* that you might live. O what thanks then are due to him.

"Too much to thee I cannot give,  
Too much I cannot do for thee,  
Let all thy love and all thy grief  
Grav'n on my heart for ever be!"

**BE CONSISTENT** as well as grateful. Live to Christ. "Glorify him in your bodies and in your spirits which are his. You must identify yourselves with all that belongs to him; his cause must be yours, his people yours. You are required, as Christians, not only to live to Christ, but to live *like* him, to live the life of Christ. We do not sufficiently consider the height of our calling; we are not careful to live up to the standard. As Christians, we ought to live the life of Christ over again: the removal of his bodily presence was no doubt a great loss to the world; but mark how the gospel repairs this loss. Christians are to be made like Christ, that they may be his substitutes, and become to the world what he would be were he still upon earth. We are called to be his visible representatives; every Christian is a sort of Christ, resembling him, going about doing good, strengthening the weak and defenceless; bearing testimony meekly and mildly against evil, doing good in every possible way. Then will it be seen that Christ is indeed our life. Let us set about this work immediately in our families and in our neighbourhoods, with more prayer than we have ever yet done, and therefore with more success.

**BE USEFUL.** You may have to contend with difficulties, to encounter enemies, to make struggles, but you shall be ultimately successful. May God grant you this grace.

#### DUTIES TO THE AFFLICTED.

In the discharge of parochial duties the sick and afflicted will have the strongest claims upon your time and attention. Let these claims always be held sacred. Wait not to be sent for. Hasten to them as soon as you know that they are in distress. And while on your way to the sick chamber, or the house of mourning, lift up your soul in prayer to God, that he will put thoughts into your heart, and words into your mouth; that he will enable you to be faithful, and bless your visit. If the sickness be severe, let your remarks be few and direct, and your prayers commonly short; but let your calls be frequent. When there is imminent danger in the case, study not to conceal it; but urge upon the sick man the infinite importance of immediate preparation for death. If it is one of the sheep, or one of the lambs of Christ's flock, who is about to be called home, and is rejoicing in the prospect; talk of heaven, of deliverance from sin, of the excellence of Christ, of the glory of God, and of the songs of the redeemed.

If it is the dying bed of an impenitent sinner to which you are called, and he is stupid; O, if it be possible, sound a note of alarm so deep, that it shall awake his slumbering conscience; and at the same time so affectionate, that he shall thank and love you for your faithfulness. Hold no fellowship with that cruel affection which conceals from a dying friend his danger, or which cries, "Peace, when there is no peace." If the dying sinner is alarmed, and his transgressions are at least set in order before him, beware that you do not comfort him too soon. Many, I fear, have been destroyed in this way. The law was doing its work, and would have brought them to the cross of Christ, but for the pains which were prematurely taken to convince them that their sins were forgiven, and that all was safe. Rejoice in it, if you have good evidence that a sinner has been plucked as a brand from the burning at the very close of life; but in your preaching and conversation lay very little stress upon a death-bed repentance.—*Dr. Humphreys.*

## SERMON XII.

### RESIGNATION TO THE DIVINE WILL.

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF THE LATE REV. R. HALL, D.D., PREACHED AT  
BROADMEAD CHAPEL, BRISTOL, MARCH 6, 1831.

BY THE REV. J. HUGHES,  
OF BATTERSEA.

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*"All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."*—Job xiv. 14.

We are assembled on an occasion of no ordinary interest. Mortality, through the whole of its vast range, has not of late, furnished a more affecting monument, than that which we are now invited, urged, and, indeed, *compelled*, to contemplate. May God inspire us with appropriate feelings! A voice from the sepulchre, and from heaven, bespeaks profound attention, and, in accordance with it, several impressive views, opening before a reflecting mind, call for deep solemnity, prostrate submission, tender condolence, warm congratulations, and fervent prayer. Many more things are recommended by that interesting, sublime, and pathetic voice—especially a renewed concern for our own and others' spiritual safety and welfare. If these be duly cherished, the gifted and estimable friend, who lived not in vain, will not have died in vain; but we shall, one after another, be prompted, at least in a personal reference, to say—though weeping—"I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel."

Assuredly such is the holy and merciful design of God in the stroke so recently inflicted here. Oh, that it may be accomplished, in respect to us, to you all, my esteemed hearers, and to the cause of God in general!

As the result of that stroke, a task has devolved on me, honourable indeed, but far too arduous for my mental strength, on which it presses. I speak not this from false humility, or with the mean and worthless hope of securing a courteous contradiction; I speak as a man claiming no superior eminent talents, or Christian worth, is bound to speak. The fact is, I could not, without making an ungracious sacrifice, turn away from a request preferred by the bereaved family, and supported by the representatives of the bereaved congregation. In addition to this circumstance, looking back more than six and forty years, I cannot lightly reverence, as his fellow pupil, what our departed friend was in the sanctuary, and in the seminary, even at that early period of his splendid course. Nor can I advert without emotion to a subsequent period, during which it was my lot to occupy, with an incompetency quite humiliating, the very same department of labour and responsibility. It may also be added that the distinguished individual, whose removal we deplore, never failed to indulge me with a prompt and most cordial reception.

By these and similar considerations my reluctance on other grounds to appear officially before you this morning has been, though not altogether destroyed, yet materially diminished. Instead,

therefore, of dwelling on conscious inability, I will proceed in the present service, assured that you will exercise candour, and be anxious to enjoy the divine approval and blessing. As to the portraiture which it were unavailing to require of me, I would not easily resign the hope that it will be delineated by the pencil of some accomplished master. There is an ambition which is not only lawful, but is encouraged by that sacred Spirit, who at the same time, would have us to recollect these words: "Be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

Fain would I, particularly at this interesting hour, be inspired with an ambition to do good: and, if that heaven-born principle predominate within me, then shall I accost my fellow mourners in a right spirit; and He, who alone can infuse it, will, I doubt not, prosper my effort, and so award me a prize, in comparison with which the plaudits earned by literature, philosophy, and eloquence, are but as sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal. Alas! those plaudits are always dangerous, and often fatal.

Death—preceded by intense pain, the silent, solitary, perhaps needful, monitor of the deceased, with slight intermissions, from his youth to more than mature age—death has at length been commissioned to despoil your circle, my brethren, of a costly victim, who sunk under the blows of that ruthless assailant, whose flesh has in consequence seen corruption, and whose form we shall never, while sojourning here, behold again.

If a man die, shall he live again?—shall he not utterly perish, and become an eternal desolation? What a relief must it be to entertain an opposite view of the case—to feel assured that this wreck, so far from being total and irremediable, can, in no degree involve, as it regards a servant of God, the unspeakably more glorious part of his compound and marvellous nature which we denominate the soul. The relief would in anticipation, be complete had we equal authority to believe that the body also shall live again, and share with the soul its felicitous immortality. He who

avows indifference to such a prospect must surely be pronounced either a hypocrite, an idiot, or a monster. Yet, in this field of inquiry, where may we expect to reap satisfaction? Pagans have toiled here with laudable diligence and solicitude, being scarcely less anxious to kindle a few sparks of hope into a bright and steady flame than our modern sons of darkness are to witness and promote their extinction. How superior in the contrast do we necessarily account a Socrates, a Plato, a Cicero, and a Seneca! Still these sages could only reason well. They ascended not above the regions of happy conjecture and high probability. All the certainty of our existence in another world must be gathered not from argument, but from *information*; and that information none, except "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity," can impart. He, however, in language more or less full and distinct, has spoken of invisible and lasting realities. In making a transition especially from the Old Testament to the New, the subject is exhibited with so much additional clearness that—as if all the previous discoveries had been mere varieties of shade—we are taught by an apostle to say, "Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel."

The great question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" may, I trust, be now numbered among questions which have received a satisfactory answer. Such an admission is sure to be made by all who consider the Bible to be a communication from the supreme Being:—with others, I enter this day into no discussion.

It remains for me to illustrate the words first read, and then to remind you afresh, and more specifically, of the dispensation which has brought hither so immense a multitude, and will elsewhere rivet the sadder minds of so many affectionate hearers. "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." So spake Job, a man whose excellency and affection were alike proverbial. He spake as it becomes us to speak. Let us, with the evangelical economy before our eyes, expatiate on his determination, and adopt it too.

What, then, is the nature, and what the due influence, my fellow Christians, of our prospect as thus referred to? "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."

I. We have THE PROSPECT OF A CHANGE.

Many changes are incidental to human beings, but there are *three* which stand out with prominence above the rest.

One extraordinary change occurs when human beings become *rational*. During infancy they are conscious of sensation, but unconscious of reflection. Hence, at that period, they say nothing—they learn nothing; they neither hear nor transgress any commandment; they are not in a state of probation. Gradually, however, and in a manner which entirely eludes our notice, the thinking faculty, and all the passions, develop themselves. Children listen to sounds, articulate, and converse. Young persons read, write, and learn a language or an art. A little afterwards they go into business; they provide for their families; some being condemned to the meanest drudgery, and some, like him whom you once delighted to call your minister, shining in the annals of fame, the admiration of the age and the country which they contributed to adorn. Let it not be forgotten, my hearers, that, as reason strengthens, all persons become more and more amenable both to God and to man.

A change more momentous occurs when human beings become *religious*. This change is requisite for those, universally, who have not already experienced it. Its necessity arises from the hereditary contagion which corrupts the race and taints us all—whether we have rendered ourselves obnoxious to our acquaintances, or have conciliated their good will and affection—whether we have been profligate or moral—whether we have neglected sacred ordinances or outwardly observed them. We are assured, by an inspired writer, that "if any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature; old things are passed away and behold all things have become new." What says Christ himself? "Except a man be born again he cannot see the

kingdom of God." How sharp the conflicts, and pungent the sorrows—how rich and diffusive the heavenly light—how importunate the supplications—how strong the purposes—how rich the comforts—how warm the gratitude—how exemplary the whole character, when, under the regenerating agency of the Holy Ghost, fallen creatures justly reckon themselves to be "dead, indeed, unto sin, but alive unto God, through our Lord Jesus Christ:" "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever!"

After all, the great consummation is reserved for the time when human beings become *immortal*—the subjects of a change of which the being made first rational, and then religious, are but the indispensable preparatories. "This corruption (my Christian brethren) must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." Then will the term of our minority expire, and we shall receive our best inheritance. Then shall we go to another world, and have joyful communion with exalted spirits, thus far invisible. The garden of Eden never offered such beauty to the eye, such music to the ear, or such fruit to the taste, as will delight the inhabitants of those more glorious regions. They are "before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more: neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." They who ascend from the earth, thither, are *transformed* as well as *translated*. No residue of sin cleaves to them in their wonders of delight. Hence it is written, "They are without fault before the throne of God." And, again, "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word: that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or



any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

Is it, however, merely the soul of a believer in Jesus Christ that enters the kingdom? Must its ancient partner—the body, lie always in the dust, or roam in a separate and less splendid province of the divine empire? No, for the apostle, foretelling its resurrection says, "It shall be raised in power;" and, using an epithet never before applied to that substance, and even now inapplicable among mortals, he calls the body that shall be so raised, "A *spiritual* body." I close this statement, relative to the change which the body is to undergo, with another quotation from the same apostle, "Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

II. Let me describe **THE INFLUENCE OF THIS PROSPECT**—the influence which it ought to have on every spectator—the influence which it had on the patriarch, who said, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."

1. *The prospect of our change may be viewed in connexion with the general current of our thoughts.*

Job reckoned on a great change, the result not of accident or of a creature's energy, but of a divine declaration. He believed that the time for its taking place, as well as the change itself, was appointed, and the interests dependent upon it were, in his apprehension, so numerous and vast, that he appears to have been tenacious of the theme, as one which he was scarcely willing to dismiss for a single moment. Accordingly, he intended in our text to renew the distant anticipation of it, not only in some of those of his own day, but throughout every successive age. Let us, my brethren, habitually refer to that eventful crisis, and often retire from the interruptions of business and the enjoyments of society, that by faith we may gaze on the stupendous scenes which shall be-

token its arrival. Shall such counsels need to be enforced? How fares it with us when we have in prospect either what is most common in the troubles of the world, or what is most exquisite in its gratifications? The subject is adhesive; it absorbs us; its claim is felt to be irresistible; it is borne into our parties; it haunts our solitude; it steals our slumbers. My brethren, that all-important change—to which I pray that our attention may be duly turned—had long secured the attention of our departed friend: his mind was solemnly familiar with it. You who most remember the strain of his discourses and conversation will be most prompt to testify that he spoke, time after time, "as seeing him that is invisible," and as under a vivid impression of those serious subjects—death, judgment, and eternity.

2. The prospect of our change may be viewed also in *connexion with our estimate of all earthly good.*

God may have brought within our reach many pleasant and profitable things; and as yet we may not, like Job, have been forced with terrible emotions, to witness their departure. What, then! shall they make us blind and insensible to the future? Shall we revel heedless amidst the diversified changes of others? The claims of religion, and the dictates even of mere reason, prescribe another course; for riches, and health, and fame, and friendship, and all beside which can render a sublunary portion valuable, and life itself are held by a precarious tenure. Let us, therefore, while retaining our several possessions, and in them the elements of external prosperity, rebuke in others, and chiefly in ourselves, that extravagant attachment and reliance which would imply a conviction that their worth is pre-eminent, and their duration sure. Let us use them like those who know that they are but secondary things, and things which may take their flight to-morrow. Let us regulate our minds not so much by the consciousness of their existence as by the foresight of their removal, waiting all the days of our appointed time till our change come—that change which shall at once unveil the throne of

heaven, and cast all the glories of this world into perpetual oblivion.

3. Again. The prospect of our change may be viewed in *connexion with our individual exertions and supplications.*

The sum of all the inquiry thus awakened is, "What must I do to be saved?" Whence comes it that language so befitting a degraded, condemned, troubled, and dying race prevails so little? It is surely no slight evil to be the enemy of God, the slaves of Satan, and the heirs of hell. How pitiable are all they who remain in such a case! The more pitiable if insensible of its horrors, and consequently indisposed to cry, Who will direct me to the means of emancipation?

Inquiry, my brethren, must be followed up with corresponding exertions, not in the style of self-complacency, as though we claimed some particles of merit, or could, in the least, expiate our guilt—nor in the style of self-confidence, as though we could, in any wise, repair the ruins of our desolated nature. Our exertions, if acceptable and availing, must emanate from a deeply impressed sense of worthlessness, self-misery, and danger, issuing in faith, and penitential sorrow, and watchfulness, and self-discipline, and humble trust, and pious activity.

If inquiry must be followed up with exertion, faith must also be followed up with supplication. We are all dependant on God for every thing; more especially for a valid title to an inheritance above, and for the hearty assurance of an admission there. Let us wait, in these various ways, until our change come. No sooner shall we fix our minds intently on the sacred volume, than we shall find that there is forgiveness with God, his adorable Son having suffered the just for the unjust, that by the sacrifice of himself he might put away sin—we shall find that through him we have access, by one Spirit, to the Father. It is the sacred volume that describes and urges the exertion in which this inquiry must terminate—the strivings of our lives—the wrestling with principalities and powers—the denial of ungodliness and worldly lusts—the taking of the kingdom of heaven by violence—the being faithful unto

death. In our supplications, let us be fervent, copious, and unwearied—still, however, presenting them in the name of Jesus, our advocate within the veil. Then shall we be brought into closer and closer union with his Father and our Father, and be made more and more "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

4. The prospect of our change may yet further be viewed, in *connexion with all our interfering pains and distresses.*

Job's case was severely complicated. His mind, his body, and his circumstances, demanded the pity of all around him. Adverting, however, to his expected change, he seems to have subsided into a temporary calm, and to have resolved that, instead of yielding to fretfulness and fear, he would cultivate patience and submission. This is one of the constructions which may fairly be put on these words, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." May we not naturally suppose that your late minister—excruciating as his agonies often were—often repeated these words, and in the sense here attributed to them? Let us, while "we groan, being burthened," imitate him. Let us chide every tendency to complain of Him, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being." Let us be comforted with reflecting how few are the years which shall revolve before this scene of tribulation shall be annihilated.

5. Finally. The prospect of our change may be viewed in *connexion with all that is grand and joyful.*

Immediately after Job had uttered the text, he said, "Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands." But he rose to a higher elevation, when he said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Let us, my brethren, through the obedience, the atonement, and the intercession of our high-priest, seek for partnership in this triumphant confidence, giving "all diligence to make our calling and election sure," by adding

to our "faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." Then shall we joyfully aid each other, at every renewal of our intercourse—our moral atmosphere will become purer and purer as we approach the land, the inhabitants of which shall never say, "I am sick"—and at length an entrance shall be ministered to us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

It is now my duty to request your particular notice to the dispensation which has clothed this assembly in the attire of mourning. The voice of our departed friend has been sounding in the public ear for almost half a century, and will sound through the nation for ages yet to come. A more eminent man seldom occupies the sphere of human agency. His reasoning powers were of the highest order. To him it was given, if I may so speak, to penetrate subjects as by a momentary intuition, and to fetch into view, soon after he had commenced his search, those deeply hidden treasures of the intellectual mind, to the discovery and the display of which most men, even of acknowledged talent, must have employed an elaborate process. According to the best import of the term, he gave the impression of his being a profound metaphysician, who, had he thought it proper to pursue the science of the mind—so great was his acumen—would probably have been rivalled by few, and surpassed by none. Sound judgment, and finished taste, and rich imagination, accompanied with real, unaffected piety and earnestness, together with touching pathos, pervaded his compositions in general, and rendered those, particularly of a religious nature, inimitably grand. He had all the attributes of genius—that rare and masterly faculty which it is more easy to appreciate than to define. His erudition was that of the elegant scholar. He had formed his *style* on the purest models of Greece, Italy, and his native land. He took pains with it, and wrought it into that force, and beauty, and plainness,

which placed him high in the first class of the most admired writers. With but a small compass of voice, the character of his ideas, their lucid order, his happy choice of expressions, the melody of his tones, the rapidity of his utterance, the fire of his eye, and the ardour of his feelings, drew from our lips, and from our hearts, the testimony which can be neither controverted nor suppressed, "This is eloquence—*this is eloquence indeed!*"

Had it been his destination to speak in the senate, or to plead at the bar, with a few exceptions, he would have eclipsed every competitor. But God gave him a better promotion. Not most certainly of that kind to which avarice and ambition aspire, but that which infinitely exceeded all that was ever reached by her most prosperous votaries. His Saviour "counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry," and thus honoured him with the weighty, yet delightful commission, "I send thee among the people, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."

My esteemed hearers, attend me now in the survey and estimate of Mr. Hall as occupying the department, in which, through the influence of divine grace, he shone to the greatest advantage; and that not for his own sake merely, but for that of others. May you especially that are young, cherish into a devout and firm purpose, as it regards yourselves, the recollection that he could say, with Obadiah, "I feared the Lord from my youth." It was before he had attained his sixteenth year, that he publicly professed the religion which continued to be the guide, and the stay, and the ornament of his truly Christian life. There are many who, as if the Creator stood low on the list of claimants—as if his service were perfect drudgery—and as if he might be neglected with impunity, pass the meridian of life without the least care to honour or to glorify him, or even to be accepted in his Son. At length, it may that some, satiated with the world's luxu-

ries—some oppressed by disappointment—some stung with remorse, and dreading God's fiery judgments, tender him a few quivering sparks—a fragment or two of time—the mere wreck of what they once were both in body and in mind, as they approach, doubtful and tremulous, the dark confines of eternity. How different was it with our departed friend! He began his pilgrimage and warfare at the very dawn of life's cheerful years. Some present may recollect and will appreciate the joy, which must have quickened into an enlivened warmth of gratitude, of the heart of his excellent and gifted father on the day which witnessed the baptismal recognition of such a son's surrender and dedication of himself to God. Are none of you, in such manner, at least, as conscience dictates, found substantially walking in his steps. A portion of you, who acknowledge Him to whom you are indebted, could furnish me with an answer, which I pray that God would make universal. Why should not all, during the vernal season of the moral year, discover, amidst the gardens of Zion, those fair blossoms, which, cherished by the dew of the Holy Ghost, and the rays of the Sun of righteousness, shall expand till the weeks of an abundant harvest arrive—that harvest of which so sweet a specimen has lately been conveyed from earth to heaven. Allow me this morning, to advance a plea for God. Indeed, he is worthy to be adored, and trusted, and loved, and obeyed. O that I felt towards him what it becomes me to feel, and had ability and leisure to express myself accordingly! But I advance not a plea for God alone; I am also your advocate. Come and join yourselves to him in an everlasting covenant. He waits to receive you; already his paternal heart melts over you; and, on your first approach, he will smile, and declare, "From this day will I bless you." Did it once enter the mind of him, whose voice and countenance will, in this vale of mortality, arrest your attention no more—did it once enter into his mind to regret that he was too early in avouching the Lord to be his God? Accept my tribute of affectionate solicitude thus cordially, though at the special instigation—

truth requires me to add—of one who said with emphasis, which my heart venerated, "Do not, in your discourse, overlook so opportune an occasion of pressing a life of thoughtfulness and piety on the young."

It has been intimated by me, that in becoming a Christian minister Mr. Hall not only obeyed the divine will, but entered upon the most useful, and therefore the noblest, career. I had not such an acquaintance with his spiritual history, at that period, as would enable me to speak concerning it with minuteness, or in positive terms. The pleasing probability, however, is that he had previously abased himself, as a perishing offender, before the Holy One of Israel—that he had believed in Jesus to the saving of the soul, and that he was moved with compassion for a world lying in wickedness. That he was afterwards, at least, strongly marked with these characteristics, there can be no question. He belonged to what is called the *evangelical school*, a school which, owing to the speculations and collisions of modern partizans, cannot be so exactly described as it might have been thirty years ago. Still, it may, and it will, be represented as the depository of those expositions and confessions in which the protestant churches, according, at least, to their respective acknowledgments, are mainly united. It asserts, in plain language, the corruption of human nature—the divinity of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit—together with the vicarious pains and sorrows of the former, and the renewing influence of the latter. The venerable and bold Archbishop Leighton announces the system well, in language which has long since been made common, and which marks it distinctly. He says, "It lays low the sinner, exalts the Saviour, and promotes holiness." I speak it to the credit of Mr. Hall, that he knew, as a *theological speculator*, where to stop—that, having arrived, through divine assistance, farther and farther, after reasoning appeared to fail, he rejoiced to sit a humble learner at the feet of Jesus—that he shrank from scholastic subtleties—and that he was too wise, too modest, and too scriptural, to attempt

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becoming the founder, or the factious patron, of a sect. As a *biblical critic* he was capable, after all that has been affirmed in Britain and on the continent, of throwing much additional light on obscure passages and disputed doctrines. As an *expositor* he was clear, perspicuous, and most energetic; and, in his *social addresses* from the pulpit, he did indeed speak as the oracle of God, and held up truth in its interesting—its solemn—its encouraging, and its alarming aspects. There, in a style peculiarly his own, he warned, rebuked, and remonstrated. There, he disclosed the enormity of sin, its varieties, its windings, and its worthlessness. There he unfolded the richness of divine grace, the beauties of holiness, and the felicities of our eternal home. There he constantly renewed his purpose to expatiate on Jesus Christ, as our wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. I have no doubt that many have been compelled to acknowledge that the gospel had no charms for them, or none that conquered their sceptical indifference and carnality, before they beheld it through the medium of his illustration. The simple text of the Bible, when he was the reader, was elucidated I had almost said, more than by the extended commentary of an ordinary man. He quoted well; so that, like a celebrated female writer within your own circle, and a preacher of high reputation in a neighbouring city, he has often impressed me with the beneficial dexterity which may be evinced in detaching portions of the Bible, so as to set them like “apples of gold in pictures of silver.”

The *exordiums* of his discourses were conducted deliberately, and not without a degree of hesitation. His *divisions* were always natural, and nearly always simple. He kindled as he proceeded, till, borne upwards on the wings of seraphic delight, he seemed as if he could spare only a single glance even for his beloved flock, and that for the purpose of stimulating them to share with their pastor in the joy of their common Lord; and that moment he shut the book and finished his discourse, leaving them to regret that he had finished it so soon.

Need I remind you of his humility, his simplicity, and his importunity in *prayer*. He gathered up himself to take hold of the strength of God, and to enjoy it for his own benefit and that of all others. Perhaps we could have no view of him more striking, and more conducive to our improvement, than when we saw him drawing nigh to the throne of the heavenly grace, and heard him imploring mercy there. What a spectacle for the eye, what sounds for the ear, of men who, without a tenth part of his talent or of his virtue, think it useless to pray and needless to repent!

In the divided state of Christendom we necessarily show our respective preferences. He did. Mr. Hall was decidedly a *Protestant dissenter*; but who has more warmly eulogized the “Liturgy of the established Church?” His expressions are these, “I believe that the evangelical purity of its sentiments, and the chastened fervour of its devotion, and the majestic simplicity of its language, have combined to place in it the very first rank of uninspired compositions.” He was an uncompromising *Baptist*, but he respected the rights of conscience. He conceded that liberality which he required and exercised. He recoiled from the thought of augmenting, as he would have deemed it, the ritual peculiarity of so small a denomination into a barrier that should exclude from sacramental fellowship the members of every denomination besides, when a Howe, an Owen, a Baxter, a Wesley, a Whitfield, a Doddridge a Watts, were entreating to be admitted. So, on the other hand, it is to be lamented that such a saint and such a preacher as he was, should have been disqualified, either by law or by convention, from visiting wherever a sanctuary was prepared and a congregation was eager to receive him. At the end of each Sabbath he returned to bless his household; and day after day, whether at home or abroad, his advice, his sympathy, his bounty, and his spiritual gifts, awaited those who had need of what it was in his power to communicate.

I have remarked with some surprise, not unconnected with admiration, that

neither at Cambridge, nor at Leicester, nor at Bristol, was he understood to frequent, with an undue zest, the society of the learned or the opulent, notwithstanding he must have met the eager invitations of all who were qualified to enjoy the feast of reason. That he was esteemed by a Mackintosh, and such men, some of you are aware. Disease, I am sensible, tends to lessen the literary appetite for fame; yet, if the love of fame had been his unconquerable passion, it would have overwhelmed the banks within which prudence and piety sought to confine it. He had an early passion, but it was generous and sacred, and hence he condescended to men of low estate. It was enough for him that he perceived there the fruits of the Spirit, and he immediately attempted to accelerate their growth for immortality.

From this adulatory account are there no deductions to be made on the score of failings? He, decidedly, would have exclaimed, "Yes, and they are serious and many." He had his failings, but your candour traces even these admissions, in part to his temperament, and in part to the very source of his eminence. The gay and satirical strain of his juvenile communications—the exuberance of that wit which was dignified and pure, as well as original, and his occasional vehemence of expression, sometimes degenerate from the energy with which he wielded the sword of the Spirit against the army of the aliens. There were a few points of singularity, and, now and then, a want of precision in minute arrangements. Attaching, however, chiefly to his early years, were they not resolvable into those habits of sublime abstraction which are scarcely compatible with a full measure of attention to the affairs and usages of common life?

As to his reluctance to become an author, and so to extend the sphere of his usefulness, he was, indeed, physically disabled; and the ground which he would have preferred was, in his opinion, and according to his modest estimate, preoccupied by his superiors.

Whatever he was, it has pleased God to remove him from us. Many a storm

had beaten vehemently upon his earthly tabernacle without destroying it; again and again it was, as it were, repaired, so as to continue, though inconvenient, yet tenable by its immortal occupant. At length, after only four years spent here, he heard the voice of the dispensation, which said, "These are your last public labours. Your warfare is all but accomplished. One stroke more and your tabernacle shall be dissolved; and thou shalt be elevated to thy destined state, among the spirits of just men made perfect." In the course of his illness, when the nature of it did not interfere to prevent, he showed where his thoughts were. That he had embraced the gospel was manifest by signifying, in a whisper to his dearest relative, his need of Christ, and his reliance on him.

Now I turn to you, his deeply afflicted sisters, and to you, the still more deeply afflicted widow. You have lost much, but you mourn not without encouragement, from the pleasing recollection, and the more pleasing hopes, that to him "the bitterness of death is past." He is conscious of no sin—he endures no pain—he fears no evil. He is where and what he would be, and shall be for ever and ever. You cannot wish to recall him. I trust, however, that you are following him—that you will be comforted from stage to stage, and finally be united to him more intimately and more happily than could, under the most gratifying circumstances, have been permitted here.

I am not unmindful of you, the surviving orphans. Bereaved of so good a parent, what can you do? I would recommend you—contemplating God, who is most wise, most mighty, and most merciful—from this time, if never before, to say, "Thou art my Father, thou shalt be the guide of my youth." Were the individual whom you have so much reason to love and venerate again to call you around him, would he not allure, encourage, and admonish you to choose God for your Father, and serve him with a perfect heart and willing mind? All secrets, all hearts, all understandings, and all the imaginations of the thoughts are open and naked before him. "If thou seek him

he will be found of thee, but if thou forsake him he will cast thee off for ever." Many a prayer has been and will be offered on your behalf; and the substance of them is, that you may be the children of God, the members of Christ, and the heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Then, instead of being mentioned as samples of that degeneracy which so often stigmatizes a minister's children, you will love one another—you will prove comforts to your surviving parent—you will rejoice the church—you will elicit the friendly attestation, Thy son and thy daughters are worthy of their parentage. Is there not already found, in more than one of you, some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel?

Next I appeal to you, the *members of this church, and the rest of the stated congregation*. When recollecting what I have either known or seen recorded of Mr. Hall, Dr. Ryland, Dr. Evans, Dr. Hugh Evans his father, and Mr. Fawcett, I rehearse the ministerial progress of five such men as have seldom presided in uniform succession over any one of our churches. Thankfully resign what the universal proprietor has demanded. Maintain your oneness with the Saviour. Treasure up the things which your late pastor has taught you. Be anxious to deepen the impressions which he has made. Tremble at the idea of being lost after so long an attendance on such means of grace and salvation, and pray that every succeeding reference to the name of Hall may conduct you to that of the chief Shepherd, may bring a reinforcement to your faith, to your charity, to your spiritual-mindedness, and to your holy zeal. As it regards your loss, may God supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

As for you, my esteemed friend, once the delighted and admiring *colleague* of him whom you will serve in the gospel no more, you will, I am persuaded, seriously repair to the everlasting spring of consolation.

And you, the *candidates for the sacred office*, deprived now of the finest specimen of ministerial address, I mourn with you, but justify him who hath said, "Have I

not a right to do what I will with mine own?" Walk as Mr. Hall did, closely and humbly with God. Take heed unto yourselves and to your doctrine. Search the Scriptures. Serve your generation according to the will of God. Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might; and keep in view the assurance given by our Lord's apostle, "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." You may be wanting in those accomplishments which rendered Mr. Hall one of the phenomena of the age—his depth, his sublimity, his mental vigour, his breathing thoughts, his burning words;—but you may hope, by the divine aid, to approach him in sanctification, in kindness, in devotedness to God, and in a concern for the salvation of men. You may also hope to make an effectual display of the truth as it is in Jesus; and, singling out some of the great assembly that shall be converted hereafter, it may be yours to exclaim, "Behold, here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me."

All *Christian ministers* are impressed by this solemn event. Many of them feel as though, in parting with this one brother, they had parted with many. They look down on the dreary chasm produced by the ascent of his triumphant spirit, and ask despairingly, When will it be filled as it was before he left it? They are dispersed through a diversity of religious connexions, but they were wont to claim him as a fellow member with them, applying to him the encomium first applied to another minister, "Such he was as every Christian church would have rejoiced to have adopted."

Some have never heard him, but they have read his printed productions, and in them they recognise the illuminated and strenuous asserter of divine truth, or they have heard of him as a preacher who scorned the tinsel of heartless eloquence. Various individuals have sunk in the most important kind of reputation as they have advanced in years, or have suffered shipwreck even within sight of the harbour; but you have perceived that his doctrine and his example shone "more

and more unto the perfect day." So may  
I be with you!

A document has been prepared by the medical friend to whom, under God, he owed so much mitigation of pain in the last days of his life; and it is so minute and interesting that I can only lament its having come into my possession too late for the use which might have been made of it on the present occasion. On reading it, I was distressed to think of the torture which agitated his body; but I was proportionately relieved by his calmness and serenity of mind, and by his tender but solemn allusions to Him who, amidst the pangs of crucifixion, cried out in agonies resulting from a bitter source, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" and also his most refreshing persuasion that all would soon be well with him—for he would soon be with his God! The church, at large, could ill spare him; but he is happy. May every preacher, who had the opportunity of appreciating him, and may all here, and elsewhere, that ever had the privilege of his acquaintance or ministry, follow him as he followed Christ, and be associated with him in the service and the bliss of eternity. Amen.

### THE PULPIT GALLERY.

NO. VI.

THE REV. ROBERT HALL, D.D.

*Late Pastor of Broadmead Meeting, Bristol.*

ROBERT HALL was a son of the Rev. Robert Hall, a Baptist minister, and was born at Arnsby, in Leicestershire, in the year 1764. At the age of seventeen, Mr. Hall entered himself a student at King's college, Aberdeen, where he highly distinguished himself. In his twentieth year, he took his degree of master of arts, and became assistant to Dr. Evans in the labours of the Bristol Academical Institution, and in the exercises of the pulpit. At this time he was visited with a severe affliction, which for a season, suspended his valuable labours. In the year 1791, he became the successor of Robert Robinson of Cambridge; and soon after his settlement, he had the satisfaction of

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seeing the pleasure of the Lord prosper in his hand.

In 1803, Mr. Hall was again afflicted and obliged to suspend all public duty; but his mind having regained its accustomed powers, he was subsequently invited to become the pastor of the Baptist church at Leicester, which offer he accepted. Here he laboured for more than twenty years beloved by his flock—esteemed by the inhabitants of the town, and revered by the clergy of the established and protected churches.

In the year 1825, Dr. Ryland the president of the Bristol academy, and pastor of Broadmead meeting, died, when Mr. Hall was unanimously chosen to succeed him in both offices. A sense of duty, after due deliberation, induced him to accept this arduous and important post. How he was esteemed and loved, and what were the opinions formed of him, during the last years of his life, may be seen by the following extract from a letter which appeared in the Bristol Journal, a few days after his decease.

"To consign in silence to the weekly record of death the sudden removal from our world of a man so pre-eminent in whatever has the strongest claim on intellectual, moral, or religious, admiration, would leave, we feel, a degree of reproach on that city which has been blessed and honoured by his presence during the last five years of his invaluable life. On such an occasion, were we to hold our peace, the very stones in our streets would cry out against us. By this melancholy event a star of the first magnitude and splendour has been eclipsed; and death has seldom claimed a richer spoil. To speak of this incomparable man in language proportioned to his merit, is far beyond the pretension of this hasty memorial: his just eulogy would require an eloquence like that which his generous spirit had so often displayed at the grave of departed excellence; like that with which he has represented the feelings of the nation on the death of the Princess Charlotte—the feelings of Leicester on the death of Mr. Robinson—or those of Bristol on that of Dr. Ryland; an eloquence like that which has so long, and

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were so lately, charmed into admiring attention the thousands who hung upon his lips. The tones of that hallowed oratory haunt us at this moment with a mental echo that will not soon die away: but alas! the living voice, or another like it, will be heard no more! In the sublime and boundless themes of religious contemplation, this sacred orator, this Christian Demosthenes, triumphed, as in an element congenial with the amplitude and grandeur of his mind. His preaching (it may be truly said, and, now that he has ceased either to preach or to hear, said without impropriety) was as far superior, in magnificence of thought and expression, to ordinary preaching, as the 'Paradise Lost' is superior to other poetry. It was, if such an image may be allowed, like harmony poured forth by a harp of a thousand strings. But he has himself unconsciously portrayed it in his exquisite remarks on the preaching of Mr. Robinson:—"You have most of you witnessed his pulpit exertions on that spot where he was accustomed to retain a listening throng, awed, penetrated, delighted, and instructed, by his manly, unaffected eloquence. Who ever heard him without feeling a persuasion that it was the man of God who addressed him, or without being struck by the perspicuity of his statements, the solidity of his thoughts, and the rich unction of his spirit? It was the harp of David, which, touched by his powerful hand, sent forth more than mortal sounds; and produced an impression far more deep and permanent than the thunder of Demosthenes, or the splendid conflagrations of Cicero!" The energies of this great spirit were concentrated in devotion; consecrated, through a long course of years, to the religious benefit of man, and the glory of a redeeming God. The intellectual sublimity and beauty of his mind were in perfect harmony with the moral elevation and spiritual grace of his character. The singular humility of his heart, the remarkable modesty and affability of his deportment, presented an affecting contrast to the splendour of his genius; his conscientious and unearthy indifference to fame or emolument was rendered the more

striking by his ability to command them, had he wished, with his tongue and with his pen. Combining the intellect of a Pascal with the oratory of a Massillon, he retained through life a transparent simplicity and sincerity, as inimitable as the wonders of his reason and eloquence; while all his endowments were embalmed and crowned by a seraphic piety. But praise is useless here: 'his praise is in all the churches:' so long as genius, hallowed and sublimed by devotion, shall command veneration, the name of Robert Hall will be remembered among the brightest examples of sainted talent: and above all, 'his record is on high:' he has passed from a state of protracted suffering into that glory to which he had long and fervently aspired, and which he had often portrayed with the vividness of one who had caught an anticipating glimpse of the beatific vision.

'His saltem accumulæ donis, et fangar inani Munere.'"

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NO. VII.

R. T. WILSON

*Late Bishop of Sodor and Man.*

THIS eminent prelate was venerable in his aspect, meek in his deportment, his face illuminated with benignity, and his heart glowing with piety: like his divine Master, he went about doing good. His ear was ever open to the tale of woe, and his hand ready to relieve. His palace was a temple of charity. Hospitality stood at his gate, and invited the stranger and beggar to a plentiful repast. The day he devoted to benevolence, and the night to piety. His revenue was dedicated to the poor and needy: and, not contented with relieving the wants, and mitigating the woes of mankind, he was solicitous, by precept and example, to conduct his little flock to the kingdom of heaven. He died in the ninety-third year of his age, and the fifty-eighth of his consecration, justly revered and lamented by the whole island; while his grave was watered with the tears of those whom his bounty had supported, his benignity had gladdened, or his eloquent piety had turned into the paths of righteousness.

## SERMON XIII.

### THE CHARACTER OF RELIGIOUS ZEAL.

BY THE REV. A. THOMSON, D.D.

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"It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing."—Gal. iv. 18.

I TAKE it for granted that the good thing here mentioned is *true religion*; and I will not suppose that any of you are alarmed at the idea of religious zeal, nor that you think it injurious or inconsistent. And I will suppose that you consider it as a character which essentially belongs to a disciple of the Saviour; and that when we say, a zealous Christian, we speak with as much propriety as when we say, a zealous friend, a zealous patriot;—that it is a grace of the Christian life; and that it gives to all other graces of the Christian character their highest tone, and their highest effect. But while zeal is as necessary in religion as in any other pursuit which is difficult; yet religion, as it is superior to all else, and as its difficulties are inconceivably greater, it is of greater importance to be zealous in religion than in any thing beside. There may, indeed, be exceptions; as when it operates for opinions in religion only—or for a part of religion, and not the whole—or in the use of means which religion does not sanction. But it is most evident that it cannot be excessive when it is directed to a right object, and by right means, and in its own spirit. We cannot be *too zealous* in working out our own salvation—or in glorifying the God who made us—or in serving the Redeemer who died for us to procure our redemption: we cannot be *too zealous* in preparing for eternity: we cannot be *too zealous* in assisting our fellow-creatures to save their immortal souls. We may be satisfied, from the example of Christ, and from the example of his disciples, and from the example of the best men in the Christian

church, that in all these things we cannot be *too zealous*. We are in danger only on the other side: we cannot go beyond due bounds: and those who are so continually cautioning their friends against being too zealous in religion, are persons who are themselves uninfluenced by the Spirit of God. How can we be too zealous to become Christians indeed, or too zealous to obtain a meetness for the eternal kingdom of God? But we shall not dwell longer on this point.

There are, however, many things to be attended to, in order that our zeal may be as *efficient* as possible. Though it cannot be too great in its degree, yet, in order that it may adorn the Christian character, and that it may produce its intended effects, our zeal must be regulated by certain principles and maxims; that it may not be injurious, but acquire a proper tone, and be made useful to ourselves and to others. The want of judgment in some who have exercised it has brought it into bad reputation; and by their recklessness they have hindered their own progress in Christianity, and prevented their usefulness to those around them. By putting our zeal under proper direction and management, we shall not only add to its ardour in our own particular case, but be beneficial in any place where its influence pervades.

I. OUR ZEAL FOR TRUE RELIGION SHOULD BE A REAL AND CONSCIENTIOUS ZEAL.—There is a zeal of *sympathy*, which is awakened by the zeal of others with whom we associate. We catch their spirit—we follow what they begin—we assume the same aspect which they wear

—we share in the credit which they obtain. There is a *constitutional* zeal; a warmth, an ardour, which enters into all we say and do—which pervades all we engage in—and which induces us to undertake what others would tremble at. And there is a zeal of *sentimentality*, which will not influence us when things are looked at in their plain form; which throws a sort of romantic glow over our object, and which leads to exercises which are too often the language of the passions; and which are too loose, and too random, to produce a decided effect. And there is a zeal of *affectation*. It has no counterpart in the affections of the heart. It is coupled with indifference, and even with hostility, to the cause it affects to serve. It courts attention; like Jehu, who took Jehonadab up into his chariot, and drove through the streets to Samaria, saying, “Come, see my zeal for the Lord!” Now, all this is wrong: this is, properly speaking, not zeal in religion; religion is not the thing in view: there is no wish for religion—no desire to promote its interests—in those who thus exercise it. The zeal of *sympathy*, for instance, is only that of a soldier, who, though himself a coward, is urged on to battle by the example of the general who is at his head. The zeal of *constitution* is a mere animal warmth, and is no more allied to our spirits, than are our arms or our feet. The zeal of *sentimentality* does not reciprocate with religion, as it is found in men who have not religion. It must have some powerful excitement, and dies away when that is gone. And the zeal of *affectation* is, in fact, hypocrisy; and is not more condemned in Scripture than it is odious in itself, and pernicious in its consequences. The zeal that is proper, is a fair demonstration of what is felt within us. It seeks not the eye of man, but acts under the keen, all-searching eye of God. It is influenced by what is real and true; it is fed by the real and great blessings which Christianity has to bestow; and then it becomes a constituent part of our character—it becomes a part of our duty—it constitutes a portion of our blessedness. It maintains its dominion in our souls; and it appears without what it is really

within, and what we are anxious to prove it to our own consciences, and to Him who sees what passes within.

And now, my friends, are you zealous? Do you think yourselves so? Are you so esteemed by your fellow-men? Do not imagine you are so, because men are satisfied with you, or because you have done much that is accounted good. Be not satisfied with this; but examine yourselves—see that you have real, heartfelt zeal. Seek to be renewed in the spirit of your minds. Be strong in your faith in that system which has God for its author, and salvation for its end. Meditate on all which that religion requires you to believe—on all it commands you to do. Think of its value to every human being. Ponder on the misery it stoops to relieve. Reflect on your own personal guilt and danger, and cordially embrace the salvation it reveals. Dart your views and thoughts forward into eternity, and let every feeling be roused, and every passion called forth into exercise; and let religion, and your zeal for it, be as firmly united in your hearts as they are in the will of God.

II. OUR ZEAL FOR RELIGION MUST ALSO BE INTELLIGENT, ACCOMPANIED WITH KNOWLEDGE. There is no subject on which we ought to be zealous, if we are ignorant of that with which it is conversant. In such case, it may do injury instead of good. Zeal is a feeling of much potency: its exercise is strong, and may be resistless; so that it requires to be operated only as to what is good. If it be employed in what is evil, it may do great injury by its success; if it be employed in what is good, the result may be greatly beneficial. We must, therefore, be well acquainted with what it proposes, and also with the means by which it is to be brought about. We must not speak of religion in its more comprehensive term, but by a particular examination of its component parts. We may say that it is religion in *general* we are anxious to promote—to propagate it in *general*—to be zealous for it in *general*. But it is only as we correctly understand its import, that we can be zealous in believing, in loving, in obeying, what it reveals and

enjoins. We may else be only pursuing a shadow instead of the substance, and devoting to error what is due to truth alone. And, even if we know *its nature*, what will this avail, if we be ignorant of the proper means to spread it? We may prove injurious; and, though we only intended good, nothing but evil may arise. We must take care that our minds be enlightened on both these subjects; that we may well understand the nature of Christianity, and the best modes of making it available to the great purposes it is designed to effect.

Many instances might be adduced to prove this. Paul says of his countrymen, "I bear them record, that *they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.*" You see that he testifies to the sincerity of their zeal, and to the general goodness of that as to which their zeal was employed; and yet they were quite wrong—their zeal went for nothing; or, rather, it served to increase their delusion, and to accelerate their ruin. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God;"—they were desirous of being saved, and that according to the will of God, but they were mistaken as to the way of salvation—as to the nature of that will; they wished to be saved by their own works; they were strangers to his righteous mode of saving; they depended on the ceremonial observances of the Mosaic ritual, instead of coming in the way of mercy which God had provided for the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ. The consequence was, they could not be exempted from wrath and obtain salvation; and at the very time they had so much *zeal*, Paul was pouring forth his earnest prayer "that they might be saved,"—that they might be led aright, and brought to obtain the salvation they desired.

And this was not peculiar to the Jews: the same thing is to be feared of many in our own day, of whose *sincerity* we dare not doubt. *Zealous* as they may be in their own way, yet, as that is the wrong way, they cannot obtain any good by the

exercise of all their zeal, however warm. If they would be zealous so as to profit themselves, it becomes them, with all humility, to go to the fountain of knowledge to obtain all that information by which it is God's will they should come to salvation. How many of our Roman Catholic brethren, for instance, are exercising the warmest zeal; but they are ignorant of the only true guide—the word of God. They are directed falsely by those who should guide them. Their zeal is zeal for the infallibility of human councils, for the traditions of men, for trifles, for will-worship, and for all the absurd mummery of superstition. The persons of whom I now speak, with sincerest pity for their ignorance, have the same feelings and passions in common with ourselves; but they have not received the truth in its purity;—and while we behold them so zealous for all the fooleries, in the belief of which they have been brought up, it well befits us to take warning by their example, and to avail ourselves of all the truth which God has revealed, and all the records of his saving grace. In proportion as we are mistaken on the subject of religion, and mistaken as to the means of its propagation, will be the injurious nature of that zeal which we cultivate in ourselves, and which we aim to promote in our fellow-men.

And, to be impartial, I will adduce in further illustration, the treatment which has been given to that sect, and to the members of that sect, as to their civil and religious capacity. I believe that these two points are not separated as they should be; and there is often a zeal exercised against them, that they may never possess a greater extension of their civil privileges, because we know that they have a system of *religion* which we are quite sure is wrong. If the persons who are thus zealous against them, believe that they shall be exposed to danger by that extension, they are right in acting as they do; and if I thought as they do, which I most certainly do not, I should act the same. We suppose, that simply because they are educated in, and make profession of, a very bad system of religion,—for this, and for no other reason

we ought to degrade and to disfranchise all who hold that system. This zeal may be very *sincere*, but it is not zeal according to *knowledge*. I believe that the system of popery is bad—that it is prejudicial to the spread of knowledge and the cause of true religion—that we should do all we can to beat it down—and that it is wrong for any man to be cold or chary in acting against it: still, it comes clearly to my mind, that *this does not form a disqualification for the enjoyment of civil privileges*; and that zeal against the system is not incompatible with a willingness for the increase of those privileges; and that this extension of their privileges is the very way to do them good, to open their minds, and to remove those barriers which have hitherto prevented free inquiry. What is perilous at one time may be safe at another; and I believe that our zeal against the system shall be greater and more effective, by granting an extension of civil liberties to men who have been under the influence of early prejudices and education, and who have too frequently been borne down by the ungenerous restrictions of a selfish policy. In saying this, I mean no offence: I only crave the liberty which I grant to others. I only contend that our zeal in religion, must be zeal according to knowledge; and that in order to have it according to knowledge, we must go to the Scriptures, which alone can enlighten. For want of this, we find men zealous in asserting dogmas which have no foundation but in their own heated fancies; and which have no more resemblance to truth than the most absurd fictions of pagan mythology.

If any of *you*, my brethren, have hitherto been zealous without light, be zealous now, and repent. Examine the Scriptures; and let your zeal be directed to a worthy end, and exerted in the use of suitable means: then shall it be useful to yourselves, and useful to all around.

III. THERE MUST BE PRUDENCE IN THE EXERCISE AND MANIFESTATION OF OUR RELIGIOUS ZEAL.—I am well aware that many Christian people are afraid of this; they are afraid that it springs from indifference to the great cause. *They* are all zeal without prudence; just as another class

of persons are all prudence without zeal. Those to whom I now allude, are chiefly *young* persons: they are all alive to the power and excellency of the gospel; their ordinary judgment and feelings are laid aside; they see religion as the one thing needful. And in the struggles of their souls to escape the evil which threatens them; and in their desires to obtain the salvation which has been wrought out for them; and in their anxiety to snatch others from the ruin which awaits them; and in the alacrity with which they proceed in the course of obedience; and in the joy with which they look forward to the glory which awaits them;—there is a warmth and impetuosity of feeling which makes them wonder how any who feel what they feel, and know what they know, and who see what they see, should set any bounds to their zeal. While we rejoice in all these, as proofs of real religion, we yet wait earnestly for the period when their zeal shall become tempered with prudence, which shall be at once their safeguard and their impetus, and enable them effectually to accomplish the very object which they propose.

We should be careful to adopt those measures which are best in themselves, and most likely to accomplish the object we propose. This is what we call *PRUDENCE*. Prudence does not damp our zeal, but enables us better to accomplish our own object. It teaches us to bring our zeal into action at those *times* which are most seasonable; and in that *manner* which is most likely to produce the greatest quantity of good. And as it teaches this, and nothing else, we should cultivate it with all humility, and practice it with all diligence. It is said of the good man, that "he will guide his affairs with discretion;" and surely, if he should do this in all his concerns, he should do it especially in religion. It was predicted of Christ, whose *zeal* was so strong that it was said to consume him, that he should "deal *prudently*;" and it is added, "he shall be exalted, and extolled, and be very high;" and what was thus his own conduct, he presses on his followers. Solomon, who was a very wise man, has said, "Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee:

he that reproveth a scorner, getteth to himself shame." And a greater than Solomon has said, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine; lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." Persecution is what the Christian is told he must expect; and he sometimes seems more ready to cope with it than avoid it, lest any should doubt his sincerity. But Jesus Christ has taught us that we should not provoke this, nor avoid the ordinary means of safety. "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men. When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another." The Christian feels deeply concerned for the honour of God, and is sometimes ready to imagine that the profane and the wicked should be swept away by an act of violence: but Christ did not so; and lest his followers should desire to go into the field to gather out the tares, he has said, "Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them."

The zeal of Paul was great: it led him to meet every hazard—to encounter every danger; he was "instant in season, out of season;" he stood constantly prepared to make a sacrifice of his life. Yet he was *prudent*; he practised himself what he advised;—"Walk in wisdom toward them that are without;"—"Let not your good be evil spoken of;"—cautions these, which, while they check no zeal, are salutary to those who, if they did not act so, would be less excellent in themselves, and less useful to others. You cannot be too zealous in obtaining personal religion; but at the same time you cannot be too prudent in the means you adopt to promote it; and at the same time that this will enable you to abound in all the fruits of righteousness, it will cause you to be instrumental in making others safe and happy.

IV. THE EXERCISE OF CHRISTIAN ZEAL MUST ALWAYS CONSIST WITH MORAL INTEGRITY.—We said at the first that you cannot be too zealous to obtain religion; and this particular may seem to contradict it.

But we spake of *true religion*; and if in your zeal you act contrary to moral integrity, it is *not* true religion: you may think so, but you mistake. True religion embraces the whole will of God; and, as moral and responsible agents, it is not more necessary that we should seek a lawful *end*, than that we should seek the gaining of that end by lawful *means*. It is never right to do wrong that good may come. Christianity in our own hearts cannot be supported by that which is in itself contrary to its own nature and object. A deliberate or systematic disobedience to any one command of God, is contrary to the very design of the holy God who gave us his gospel to make us holy. We must "abstain from all *appearance* of evil," and do that which is pleasing in the sight of God.

A striking instance of this false zeal is furnished by the conduct of the Pharisees, in the days of our Lord. "Ye say, whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, it is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free." These men were very zealous in making vows as to the temple of God, and in devoting property to that effect; but at the same time they kept back that which was due to the support of their parents, and thus brake the fifth commandment. Our Lord would commend love and zeal manifested to his house; but he condemned it when done at the expense of duty. He could not but be displeased at their pretending to please him by what was diametrically opposed to his will: and had the Pharisees been acquainted with the word of God; had they depended less on the traditions of men and the teachings of the scribes, and more on the pure word of God;—they had not so mistaken, nor pretended to honour God, while they disobeyed his will. This is one instance only; but it contains the principle we would impress upon you. Christ has here taught us that our zeal is unsound and unavailing, when it prosecutes its objects by wrong means. It is not excessive, but altogether wrong; it is not zeal for true religion. It requires, not to be regulated in its ardour, but to be changed

in its object. To please God by breaking his will, and to save the soul by an act of disobedience, is one of the strangest ideas that can possibly enter into the mind of man.

If *you*, my brethren, have had such a zeal; if, you have disregarded honesty and sincerity in search of religion; if you have acted under the influence of the sentiment, that "we may do evil that good may come;" if, under the idea of making the word of God known more extensively, you *put up with it something which is not God's word*; if, in attempting to promote the truth of God, you resort to means which God does not approve;—O, "be zealous, and *repent*;" and be assured, that without this integrity to accompany your zeal, you can never prosper, be the object you aim at never so great and well conceived.

V. OUR RELIGIOUS ZEAL MUST BE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF CHARITY.—Great things are said of charity; and while to be destitute of it, is to be destitute of the chief ornament of the Christian character; so to have it and to exercise it aright, is to have the heart purified and made meet for God. And charity is of vast importance to religious zeal. If we have it not, we shall take no pains to do good to those around us; if we see them in darkness and in danger, yet, not *loving* them, we shall make no effort to do them good; whereas, if we have charity towards them, we shall do them all the good we can. And when we are zealous for their good, then charity comes in to mould it into a better form, and to bring about more effectually the end we propose to accomplish. If we have not been taught to love God, and to hate sin—to hate sin, because we love him who first loved us; when we meet with those who are opposed to the plans of God and his salvation, we are apt to think harshly of them, and would, by one act, cast them out at once. Such a zeal is unworthy the professors of the gospel of Christ. The more sinful and wretched men are, the more anxious should we be to bring them into the ways of Christ. We should exercise the charity that "hopeth all things;" and hope that a change may take place, how-

ever bad things seem at present. By the exercise of this disposition, we shall conciliate the hearts we are anxious to win to the obedience of Christ. Charity will sublime our zeal; it will enable us to use the means with greater effect, and bring them to bear on the circumstances and situations of those whom we wish to benefit.

This charity, however, does not require us to mingle the wicked and the righteous; to imagine there is holiness where there is only sin; or to suppose that men are the servants of God, when they are, in fact, the servants of Satan. This would be but imbecility; and it would injure others, because it would lead them to practise, without compunction, the very things they ought to avoid. Some there are, of whom we cannot speak but with aversion, or of their practices but with abhorrence. Here, however, is room for the exercise of charity; in qualifying the circumstances which have given rise to the evil, and in finding room for aiming at their conversion, whatever may be the nature of their case. And while charity will lead us to pity them, and to aim at their salvation; it will prevent us from confounding with habits what has only originated in mistake, and from keeping at a distance from that which only waits for the exercise of Christian exertion and instruction, to make all proper and Christian. Charity, therefore, so far from checking our zeal, prompts us to the immediate use of proper means, and gives those means their due effect.

If we be zealous for religion, we shall be zealous for charity, which is an essential part of true religion. We therefore exhort you, in the exercise of your zeal for true religion, for the sake of others to invest your zeal with charity. I would especially enforce this on those who have but lately been brought into the ways of God. You are apt to consider your former associates as bad persons; you are even ready to consider them as outcasts from God's favour, and as something too vile to be mended or saved. O, my friends, consider that it is but a very little while since *you* also were "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity;" *you*

are but just rescued from "the horrible pit, and the miry clay;" and if God had dealt with you as you deserved, you had been plunged into the pit of destruction. It was by no merit of yours that you were saved. Many of you were in the same state as those on whom you now look with supercilious scorn. Think that they, also, may be saved as well as you; and even outstrip you, and be taken to the realms of bliss, while you are struggling, toiling, and fighting, here below! O take heed! Be zealous, be very zealous, to avoid your former evil associates, that with them you may not be carried down the stream of ruin; be zealous, be very zealous, in urging on your course in the path that leads to heaven; but let charity also have its perfect work. Be zealous to save them; be zealous to bestow on them a boon richer far than any other they can receive. Let them see that you love them; give them no proofs of resentment or hostility. So act and speak, that they may see you have not forgotten "the rock from whence you were hewn, and the hole of the pit from which you were digged." Let them see that your "heart's desire and prayer is that they may be saved." Let them see that you will gladly do all you can to serve them, consistently with your duty to God. Let them see that yours is not the zeal of suspicion, or of ill will, but the zeal of charity; that of which the apostle speaks so beautifully, when he says, it "suffereth long, and is kind; envieth not; vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

But let me not be misunderstood.—I do not inculcate zeal for charity by itself. It is too much the practice in the world at present to wish for CHARITY and PEACE. But the charity so greatly in vogue is a *spurious* charity, and not the charity of the gospel of Christ. It is true, indeed, that it "thinketh no evil;" but it is also true that it "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;"—it is charity

"out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned;"—it regards purity as the object which it is to promote and secure: it is "out of a good conscience,"—a conscience renewed—a conscience trembling at God's word—a conscience zealous for his will in all things; and it proceeds from "faith unfeigned,"—faith in the truth of God, on which it places its unalterable reliance. Such is the charity of the gospel; and under the guidance of this, religious zeal assumes its fairest character, and obtains its greatest success. Very different is the charity of the world;—all soft and mild,—a forgiving spirit, a good disposition, and a generous hand. They have no charity but that which, from the fear of doing what is disagreeable, looks on the righteous and the wicked with equal complacency; which, out of kindness to the sinner, encourages, in fact, the sin he has committed; and which, rather than put on a frown which might disturb his happiness, will let him pursue the course of danger; and which, rather than distress him, will let him go on, provided he goes on smiling and happy, to his ruin!

And so with regard to PEACE. There is much puling and whining after this in the world. If by any word or action we break in upon the harmony which is only purchased by what is subversive of divine truth; if we do any thing of this kind, they say directly—"O, all this is very true; the thing is much to be lamented;—but do not you kindle war among us; let us alone—let us abide in peace!" Brethren; this is not the peace of the gospel: it is the peace of delusion—it is the peace of death! This cannot promote the cause of God in your own souls, nor advance the glory of God in the world around. "The wisdom that is from above is *first pure, THEN peaceable*;" and we are to "follow peace with all men, and *holiness*;" and, without these, "no man shall see the Lord." "As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but *peace* shall be upon Israel;" upon those who seek to do his will, and in whom is no guile. Away, then, with this false peace, and charity, and zeal!

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Be zealous for *the truth*; "let all your deeds be done in charity,"—but remember that truth is the basis on which it should rest. And while you are zealous for peace, let it be in connexion with that truth, without which there can be no peace. Let truth be established; let it be placed on the throne on which it should reign, and then there shall be peace. *Then, PEACE is our watch-word: PEACE WITH ALL MEN—PEACE IN ALL THINGS—AND PEACE FOR EVER!*

#### DIVINE REVELATION

THERE was a time when each revelation of the word of God had an introduction into this earth, which neither permitted men to doubt whence it came, nor wherefore it was sent. If, at the giving of each several truth, a star was not lighted up in heaven, as at the birth of the prince of Truth, there was done upon the earth a wonder, to make her children listen to the message of their Maker. The Almighty made bare his arm, and, through mighty acts shown by his holy servants, gave demonstration to his truth, and found for it a sure place among the other matters of human knowledge and belief.

But now the miracles of God have ceased, and nature, secure and unmo-  
lest, is no longer called on for testimonies to her Creator's voice. No burning bush draws the footsteps to his presence-chamber; no invisible voice holds the ear awake; no hand cometh forth from the obscure to write his purpose in letters of flame. The vision is shut up, and the testimony is sealed, and the word of the Lord is ended; and this solitary volume, with its chapters and verses, is the sum total of all for which the chariot of heaven made so many visits to the earth, and the Son of God himself tabernacled and dwelt among us.

The truth which it contains once dwelt undivulged in the bosom of God; and,

on coming forth to take its place among things revealed, the heavens, and the earth, and nature, through all her chambers, gave it reverent welcome. Beyond what it reveals, the mysteries of the future are unknown. To gain its acceptance and currency, the noble army of martyrs testified unto the death. The general assembly of the first-born in heaven made it the day-star of their hopes, and the pavilion of their peace. Its every sentence is charmed with the power of God, and is powerful to the everlasting salvation of souls.—*Irving.*

#### HORRORS OF WAR.

WHEN war is awakened, the judgments of God are abroad in the earth. Thus have we seen to-night a people distinguished for their religious privileges, for their prosperity, and for their separation from all other nations, devoted to destruction because of their transgressions. Let us learn, that whenever the sword is permitted to devour, it is to chastise the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. War is horrible in its nature and in its effects. It separates the dearest and the closest connexions of human nature. One battle renders thousands of wives, widows: thousands of children, fatherless: thousands of parents, childless: thousands of spirits ruined beyond redemption! See, pressing into yonder slippery, impurpled field, throngs of all ages, seeking their own among the dead! In this disfigured countenance the child discerns with difficulty the features of his father. In that mangled body dwelt the spirit which was the prop and the glory of yonder silvery head, now bowed down over it in silent, unspeakable sorrow. There the widow washes the wounds of her husband with her tears. And how few of that dreadful list of slaughtered men were fit to die! Surely war was let loose upon the world as a curse, in the just anger of God.—*Collyer.*

## SERMON XIV.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUE WISDOM.

PREACHED FOR THE PAROCHIAL SUNDAY SCHOOLS, AT ST. BARNABAS, KING SQUARE,  
ST. LUKE'S,

BY THE RIGHT REV. DR. SUMNER

BISHOP OF WINCHESTER.

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*"Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her, for she is thy life."*—Prov. iv. 13.

THE contents of this passage show that instruction is not here used for acquisition of knowledge or intellectual enlargement, but that it is synonymous with wisdom, understanding, heavenly teaching. It is introduced in a manner singularly striking and affectionate: "Hear ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine; forsake not my law. For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, let thine heart retain my words; keep my commandments and live. Get wisdom, get understanding, forget it not; wisdom is the principal thing, and, therefore, with all thy getting, get understanding. Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go; keep her, for she is thy life."

1. The first thing that strikes the mind on the perusal of this passage, is the extreme earnestness which the wise son of David displays in pressing his advice. There is an urgency in his language, which if employed on a subject of less paramount consequence, would be deemed importunate. He recurs again and again in the most forcible terms to his favourite topic, and shoots arrow after arrow at the same mark, that the shafts may not be sped in vain, or launched into the air at a venture. "Get wisdom, get understanding; forget it not; neither decline

from the words of my mouth; forsake her not—love her—take fast hold of instruction, let her not go, keep her." This is not the style of some cold advocate, enforcing with decent seriousness a truth which, though it cannot be gainsayed, is not necessary and indispensable. They are the words of a father who feels that his son's soul is at stake—in danger of perishing for lack of knowledge—irremediably lost if it be not led in right paths, and taught in the ways of wisdom.

Would that there were such a heart in us in these matters! Do we feel for ourselves any of this stirring anxiety? Are we eagerly watching for the first ray of divine light to illumine the heart of our child—the first stirring of the waters, denoting the presence of the angel of mercy, and the gracious provision of God for healing the diseased soul. Are we pointing to instruction as the essential good which is to be first gotten, and wrestling in prayer for the blessing which is to give it effect? Do we look around us, first into the bosom of our own families, then into that larger circle which God has providentially placed under our influence, or within our reach, to see whether its younger members are children of God—led by his grace—ruled by his will—instructed by his word—living in his fear? Brethren, we have a heavy responsibility in this respect. Rich and

poor, the highest and the lowest, alike incur it. It would be a fearful thing hereafter, when some poor lost soul shall stand at the bar of God's judgment, to hear him put in the plea of justification—"No man cared for my soul," and then to be conscious that it was we ourselves who withheld from him that blessed knowledge which might have made him wise unto salvation—that it was we who were verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw him groping in the depths of spiritual darkness, and lent him no lamp to guide his feet into the way of life. Our earnestness in the discharge of this duty will doubtless be in proportion to our sense of its importance. He who values not his own soul, will unquestionably have little concern for the souls of others. He who desires not instruction for himself, will not care to impart it to the rising generation around him. Measure your own state, brethren, by this criterion; try your hearts by this test. None can be indifferent to the eternal welfare of others, but those who have not yet learnt, by the experience of their own individual case, that God desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his ways and live.

2. The text suggests, secondly, the natural alienation of the heart from instruction. It does not receive it willingly. It does not retain it, if received, without difficulty. This is strongly intimated by the earnest language of the sacred writer: "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go; keep her."

That these reiterated counsels are not superfluous, I need not demonstrate. Folly is bound up in the heart of a man. He cleaves to it as to an hereditary possession, endeared to his mind, and congenial to him, and divine grace alone can eradicate the evil. How reluctantly does the understanding submit itself to divine truth! How unwillingly does it surrender its own preconceived notions and favourite prepossessions. Take, for instance, any of the great doctrines of the gospel; the heart will embrace none of them without a struggle. It disputes, as it were, each step of the ground, and yields its conviction, not like a willing

convert, but as a vanquished enemy, incapable of further resistance. Thus it is with the doctrine of human corruption. The natural man loathes the doctrine, and either disputes it altogether, or qualifies it in such a manner as to make it less palatable to the pride of the unrenewed heart. Man is represented as liable to temptation, instead of being prone to evil continually; weak and infirm of purpose, instead of unable of himself to think or do any good thing; fallen, indeed, and imperfect, but not as our church represents him, in accordance with Scripture, very far gone from original righteousness, and while yet unregenerate, dead in trespasses and sin. Thus it is with that cardinal article of belief which has been emphatically denominated the test of a standing or a falling church—justification by faith; we are slow to admit it in all its scriptural integrity; we embrace it partially, or indistinctly, sometimes virtually, though without confessing it; sometimes with an open and distinct avowal, we mix up with the merits of Christ our own supposed works and deservings, and compile for ourselves an imaginary system, neither law nor gospel, but partaking of both, and enjoying the privileges of neither. So it is also with the doctrines of grace. We naturally look to ourselves, and not to God: we rely on our own innate power, and not on that effusion of spiritual strength which is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost. It is not until after repeated experience of our own helplessness and inability that we learn to stay ourselves on an everlasting arm, and are taught the presumptuousness and miserable folly of self-confidence.

To correct all false views of this kind is the promise of that instruction of which the text speaks. But suppose it effected, or, in other words, suppose that the Holy Spirit of God, through the medium of the preached or written word, or by a blessing upon some other means of grace, has enlightened the heart, and given it a true view of the way of salvation and of God's dealings with mankind, another difficulty arises which renders the energetic language of the text no less seasonable.

We are disposed to fall from the truth which we have once received, or to corrupt its integrity, or to waver and be unstable, carried away with every blast of vain doctrine. We need renewing day by day, lest temptations overcome us, or the love of heavenly things wax cold, or the pleasures, or the cares, or the troubles of the world, make shipwreck of our faith. If the hands flag, as those of Moses, the enemies of our salvation take advantage to prevail against us; and if the lips cease to worship in prayer, Satan enters into that which should be swept and garnished, fit for the temple of the Holy Ghost, and our last state becomes worse than the first. Hence the wise man's repeated injunction, "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go; keep her." Though she flee thee, yet abide thou in her pursuit; though the heart struggle to be freed from her bands, yet suffer not thou its escape; though the old man within, and the world without, conspire to make her teaching of none effect, yet submit thou thy will, and understanding, and affections, to her influence—"Take fast hold of her; let her not go; keep her."

3. The last clause of the text resolves the whole question into a simple and intelligible proposition. It brings the matter to a point. "Take fast hold of instruction, . . . for she is thy life." Dost thou desire to live—not the life that now is, the transient and ephemeral existence of a corruptible body, which withereth like the grass, and fadeth as a flower—but in that never ending state, when a thousand years will be as one day? Then take fast hold of instruction—in obtaining her thou hast secured thy object, for she is thy life.

And here I may remark the succinctness and plainness of Scripture, where the great truths which are necessary to salvation are concerned. "Repent and be converted, and your sins shall be blotted out." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "By grace are ye saved, through faith." "Take fast hold of instruction, for she is thy life." O that men would listen to the words of the heavenly teacher, which thus strikingly bring home the business

of life to men's bosoms! How would the shipwrecked sailor prize a compass in the midst of an unknown ocean! How would the pilgrim watch the rising of some well remembered star to guide his feet in his wanderings through a trackless wilderness! How would the fainting traveller be revived in his journey through the desert at the sight of some well of water, springing forth in the midst of rocks and sands, and providing needful relief when the whole head is weary and the whole heart sick! What the compass would be to the sailor, or the star to the pilgrim, or the well of water to the traveller, is the precept in the text to the soul of him that thirsts for divine instruction. Vainly would he wait for direction from other teachers. As there is but one good, so there is but one wise. Would he ask the sensualist what is life? He would tell him, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Would he ask the covetous man? He would tell him that to lay field to field, and to heap up many good things in store, and to multiply the sum of his possessions,—this is life. The ambitious man would tell him that life consisted in the increase of honours—the worldly man in the success of his earthly pursuits and projects—the lover of pleasure in the satisfaction of his heart's desire, and in drinking to the dregs the cup which seems so sweet to his disordered palate. But the language of Scripture is very different. "To be carnally-minded is death." "He that liveth in pleasure is dead while he liveth." On the other hand, "Take fast hold of instruction—for she is thy life." "I wisdom dwell with prudence—whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord."

There is, indeed, in that word life, a comprehensiveness which conveys the fulness of joy to the penitent soul. When the heart has been roused to a knowledge of its danger in an unrenewed state, and the sinner sees for the first time the precipice on which he stands—judgment before him, pollution and guilt in all his actions, and no mediator to stand between himself and his offended God—the whole impossibility of atoning for his sin, or of

making satisfaction for the past, is pressed with awful conviction on his mind. The final consequences of ungodliness are opened to his view. He sees written upon the wall, in characters as distinct as those which terrified the court of King Belshazzar, "the wages of sin is death." What would be the state of such a man without the gospel? Those deep and searching convictions of sin, which, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit are rendered so salutary to the soul, would lead to nothing but despair, without an acquaintance with the Saviour. That bitter repentance which makes the sinner loathe himself, and humbles his proud heart even in dust and ashes, would be hopeless and unedifying, if there were no knowledge of that fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, wherein whosoever washeth, though his sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow—though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. But how is the scene changed, where the lips of the preacher of peace has delivered his gracious message. Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. "I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live." "He that hath the Son hath life." This is indeed instruction which brings peace: it first abases the soul, and then purifies it; it teaches the nothingness of all earthly confidence, and the insufficiency of hope resting on an arm of flesh, and then brings the inquiring penitent to him who is able and willing to save, and will in no wise cast out whosoever cometh to the Father through him. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

After what has been said, brethren, you will not doubt that it is chiefly on the ground of its religious advantages, that I am desirous of seeing that institution for which I am desired to plead, receive your cordial support. In so populous a parish as this, I need not tell you that it is impossible for the steward of Christ's mysteries, who, in the providence of God, has been placed over you, to extend his private ministrations into the family of each of the poorer members of his flock. And

yet the greater the difficulty,—I should rather have said, the impracticability of such individual superintendence,—the more urgent is the necessity for it, the more prejudicial the want of it. We all know what scenes of vice are found in the crowded streets and lanes of too many a district round us—the temptations which are spread for every age—the peculiar dangers to which the young, and those of the poorer class more especially, are hourly exposed. It is a fearful thought to reflect how many perish for lack of knowledge, even in a Christian land—how many souls are lost through that brutish ignorance, which is the parent of every sin. To one who feels these things deeply, who has a compassion for perishing sinners, and longs to see them rescued from their perilous state, it is, indeed, a comfort to know that there are Christian houses opened, and Christian teachers at hand, who will train up a child in the way he should go, and lead him, while yet a little one, to the feet of Jesus. Not that I would be understood to infer that all these poor children, who are the objects of this charity, are indeed taught of God, or that they have all chosen, through divine grace, that better part which those embrace, who have taken fast hold of instruction. No, brethren; this would be much to expect; and experience, I fear, would be far from warranting such a conclusion. But I trust we may hope, that there will be found among them many a Lydia, whose heart the Lord has opened, and who has attended to the things that have been spoken unto her. I trust there are not wanting among them, those who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and who have learnt to know the value of his salvation, and the preciousness of his promises. If there be but one such, what a glorious reward would that one soul be, for all the self-denial, all the labours of love, by which you will contribute, according to your means, to support, and, I trust, to perpetuate, this useful charity in this populous neighbourhood.

Bear with me, brethren, if I press this duty on you in a manner somewhat more urgent than is usual. I cannot forget

that it was in this very place where we are now assembled, that I was first called upon to exercise my episcopal functions, by setting apart this building for a temple to the Lord, where his word might be preached, and praise and supplication might be offered in the name of Christ. It was here that for the first time I separated, in virtue of my office, from all profane and common uses, this house, as a house of prayer for worshippers in spirit and in truth. Nor have I had small pleasure in learning that the Sunday-school which has been since connected with this church, and for which I plead this day, appears to have been favoured, in an eminent degree, with the divine blessing. To many of those who hear me, its advantages are doubtless known personally. Some, I trust, there are, who have become acquainted with them more intimately in their capacity of teachers. I would bid them go on in their labour of love, with patient and steady zeal, in the name of the Lord. I would call on others who are like minded to come and do likewise—to lend their aid in the furtherance of this interesting work, and to be fellow-labourers in preparing the hearts of the young, through divine grace, for the spiritual harvest. May He who is the Lord of the harvest, prosper the undertaking! May he bless the means provided, whether by your personal teaching, or by your pecuniary contributions, with a rich and abundant increase.

THE SPIRIT IN WHICH THE BIBLE SHOULD  
BE READ.

CONSULT it divested so far as possible of prejudice, and with a sincere desire both to attain improvement and to search out the truth. The investigation which we recommend, lies equally between that inactivity which slumbers for ever over things acknowledged, and that impetuous temerity which relying on its own powers disdains assistance, attempts a flight beyond the precincts of lawful subjects, and with licentious boldness pries into

those "secret things which belong to God." Some float for ever on the surface of admitted truths, fearful to rise above the level over which they have hovered from the first moment of consciousness. These resemble those birds which feed upon the insects dancing on the water, who never rise into the air, but always skim the surface of the lake, on the borders of which they received life. Others, on bold, adventurous wing, rise into the trackless regions of mystery, till they sink from the pride of their elevation, perplexed and exhausted. These, by aiming at too much, lose every thing. Because they have attempted unsuccessfully to investigate that, which God has been pleased to put out of the reach of human comprehension, they will not believe any thing—they embrace a system of universal scepticism. So Noah's dove beheld on every side a boundless expansion of waters: and whether she rose or sunk, was equally bewildered, and found no rest for the sole of her foot. There is one point of difference, and that is, that she returned to the ark; but those whom we have described, too often are found to turn despisers, who wonder and perish. But the Christian is bold in investigating *all* that God has submitted to his researches, attempts every thing leaning on Almighty energy, and relies with implicit confidence upon the written word. So the eagle rises boldly into the air, keeping the sun in view, and builds her nest upon a rock.

We would not have you, with the inactive and supine, always coast the shore: nor with the infidel venture into the boundless ocean, without pilot, or compass, or ballast, or anchor: exposed equally to the quicksands, to the rocks, to the whirlpool, and to the tempest: but we are desirous that, like the Christian, you should boldly face, and patiently endure the storm, with the Bible as your compass, hope as your anchor, God as your pilot, and heaven as your country.—*Dr. Collyer.*

## SERMON XV.

### THE TRUE USE OF KNOWLEDGE.

BY THE REV. E. IRVING, A.M.

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*"Add to knowledge, temperance.—2 Peter i. 6.*

THERE is nothing to which men require to have their eyes opened more than to the folly of admiring knowledge upon its own account. They look upon all sorts of book-making and book-learning as the stamp of superiority, and give to it an instinctive reverence; whereas, books are but the words of men, and may as often be termed folly as declared wisdom, and may promote vice as readily as serve virtue. And he that hath written a book, hath but offered himself to our acquaintance, but hath made no advancement in our approbation. And bookish men, that is, those who accumulate an immensity of knowledge and learning, which neither nourisheth themselves nor edifieth others, are objects of pity, not of admiration; being in mind what those are in body who have gathered on themselves a load, burdensome to themselves, and unpleasant to beholders. And until the good sense of men doth discriminate amongst learned men as it doth amongst unlearned men, the learned will continue to assume to themselves that importance and pride which more than countervails their superior knowledge, and brings them into a state less favourable for spiritual advancement than the ignorant vulgar. So in our Saviour's time, the wise and prudent could not understand that which was plain to babes; because the learned, in the sufficiency of their knowledge, could not stoop to spiritual things. For the same reason, they scorned Paul in the Areopagus, as if he had been a prating fool: whence he testified that their very

knowledge had made them ignorant of God, and deaf to the invitations of the gospel.

Now, being convinced knowledge in this age produceth the same effects of swaying the mind out of that humility which is essential to the learning of Christ—that this is the true reason why your men of knowledge keep so much aloof from the simple doctrines of the cross, it hath seemed good to our minds to examine this a little, and to ascertain by what means those here present may be guarded from increasing their pride with their knowledge, and how they may promote their wisdom as they increase their knowledge. In which undertaking, to divest knowledge of an honour which it doth not merit, in order that we may, with Solomon, transfer it to wisdom, we feel as if we were entering in to despoil a holy place. For knowledge, albeit much abused, is a pure and holy possession compared with every other of which we can boast. Beauty fades, strength languisheth and fame is inconstant as the veering winds; fortune changeth every moment, and riches take to themselves wings and flee away like an eagle towards heaven; the appetites all grow dull, the eye grows dim, and the ear deaf to dulcet sounds, and all things ebb and flow, and are lost and soon forgotten. But knowledge!—knowledge almost defies these changes and fluctuations to which all human possessions are doomed. It is a thing so purely one's own; it doth so defy the power of man to take it from us; it

doth so forecast in the mind, and procreate itself independent of all power and strength of man; and it can so little be bought with money, or be by a royal road approached; and it so inhabiteth the mind within, and defieth the world without; and it is so little subject to the fluctuations of fortune, and the wasting power of time; it is on all hands in so much request—so necessary to the illustration of things old, and to the propagation of things new, to the prosecution of enterprise, to the administration of government, and the practice of every art; knowledge is so eagerly sought after by every power which striveth for the mastery in human affairs,—governors seeking men of knowledge to write them into favour, and their opponents seeking men of knowledge to write them out of favour; and the venter of every ware seeking men of knowledge to exalt its praise; and even every amusement, except bear garden and prize-fighting barbarities, being upheld by knowledge, and every projected measure advocated by knowledge:—these, the accomplishments of knowledge, are so splendid, its advantages so manifold, that it seems ignorance not to adore, and profanation to decry it. Then, moreover, knowledge doth so beget in those who possess it, such fortitude and firmness of mind; it so arms him around with divine armour—even like the goddess of knowledge whom the ancients fabled to have sprung ready armed from the forehead of Jove—so that a man of knowledge seems as great in rags, as a man of power, or a prince in his castle. Adversity cannot crush the man of knowledge; the contempt of man cannot abash him, and the threats of man cannot force him to recant;—he retires to his secret place, and summons in his spiritual counsellors; he examines, he writes, he justifies himself, he publisheth to the world, and all his enemies are at once confounded; or if they wish to make head against him, they must seek men of knowledge, for it can be overthrown by nothing but itself.

Then again, knowledge is the mother of art and beauty: knowledge is the hand-maiden, (if I may so speak,) who attireth the charms of nature, if not the mother

of whom nature holdeth her chiefest charms. So that all which beautifies the face of the country, with all which makes the city magnificent—all that adorns our dwellings, with all that makes our persons comely to look upon—all that fills the market-place with wares, and varies the occupation of human life, are the works of knowledge, without which men were a few scattered tribes of roving savages, fighting with brutal creatures for the mastery of the woods and caves where they dwell. Ay, and though every thing we now behold were swept with the besom of destruction, nature stript of her decorations, and art divested of her resources, there is such a life-giving power in this immortal faculty of knowledge, that she would, in a few years, bring again the beauties of nature, and re-invent the resources of art, and cover the earth with her beautiful flowers and pleasant palaces.

Knowledge is the support of greatness, which otherwise would die with the age that gave it birth. And a good book of former ages is a treasure which the intervening time hath striven in vain to stifle; it hath survived the things which were brought into existence along with it; and if it be a good book, it hath the probability of living to an unlimited age. In short, there is no end to the praises of knowledge.

These excellent qualities and manifold powers of knowledge, God hath endowed it withal, in order that men may fall in love with it, and pursue it; and being properly applied, it constitutes wisdom. But knowledge is not wisdom of itself; nay, knowledge does not imply the practice of godliness or of morals: it doth not imply even the existence of the common decencies of life. For knowledge and learning in the greatest plenty may dwell with wickedness and folly. A man may be familiar with all the truths of science—he may be held a consummate master, and even discover fresh truths, and invent new methods of discovering truth, and yet he may be a mere novice in the fulfilment of the duties which every one born into the world is called by his Maker to enjoy. He may be learned in all



erudition, and well versed in all the records of antiquity, and yet never acquainted his principles with true knowledge. As there are many handicrafts in the world, in which a man may reach the highest excellence without improving his morals or religion, so in the world of intellect or science, there are many departments in which men may stand unrivalled, without being advanced in any one of the attributes of a worthy or noble mind. He may be the first of wits, and the worst of husbands. He may be the first of scholars, and the most dissipated of men. He may be the most entertaining of travellers, and the most heartless of friends. He may be the first of poets, and a very ruffian in civilized society. He may be the finest moralist, and the greatest profligate—the writer of the finest sentiments, and not possessed of household feeling. I have met first-rate mathematicians who were, in all moral perception, like creatures of the vegetable kingdom. Naturalists have I met with, who appeared to soar above a good and glorious action, but would have died contented with the occupation of their lives, could they have discovered some plant, or some insect, not discoverable by the natural vision of man. And there are men who spend their lives in arranging cabinets, and deciphering ancient manuscripts, without seeing any thing worthy of pursuit or admiration, or doing any thing to extend their pursuits, in the present or eternal world.

It is not our intention to ridicule any one of these pursuits in themselves; for there is not any one of these pursuits of science and learning from which good hath not accrued in the end. But it is our intention to show, that stores of knowledge may be acquired in them, the highest elevation may be reached in them, without any approximation to wisdom, without improving the spirit of the character, so as to make it better fitted for the office of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. These are handicrafts of the intellect, if we may so speak, and those who apply to them are handicraftsmen: and you have a good reason to infer that a man is wise and noble because he is

good in working iron, or brass, or wood, in making cloth or apparel, as that a man is wise, or good, or praiseworthy, because he is good in ancient or modern literature, or because he is great in the knowledge of the three kingdoms of nature, skilled in the art of criticism, or erudite in the history of the world.

There is a blind admiration of science and learning on its own account, upon which it builds a self-importance, and which affects disdain toward the honest mechanical occupations of life. But surely, if the blinds were taken off from the private life, and mutual intercourse, and public character of these learned men, they would be found as empty of greatness, far more full of envy, and deception, and hypocrisy, than those honest callings they affect to despise. Ay, if the morals of a university, or the quarrels of literature, or the pitiful vanity and self-complacency of these sciolists in knowledge, were exhibited, it would be as shameful a picture as ever knowledge hath sketched from the market town, or the inmost recesses of the city. But far, far from us be the vulgar office of satirizing any thing, especially a thing of which we think and have spoken so highly as we have of knowledge. But it is our part to show how it stands related to wisdom—how it is inferior to wisdom, and how it may be converted into wisdom, and is not worthy of the approbation of men until converted into wisdom.

Wisdom without knowledge—there is and can be none: all thought without knowledge, is but guessing: all conduct without knowledge, is but a venture. Hence, in Scripture, knowledge stands in a high place. "This is life eternal, to know me the true God." Amongst the ancients, "Know thyself," was the first step to wisdom; and, in common affairs, a knowledge of the world is deservedly placed above all other knowledge. But knowledge of God is not religion, neither is a knowledge of the world upright dealing; something else is required. Knowledge doth but furnish out wisdom, being the light which guides us to the storehouse which supplies it. Wisdom is knowledge applied to right

and wholesome uses. Riches do not make a liberal-minded or generous man, although riches are necessary to contribute to a generous man. But if riches be pursued from a mere love of accumulation, which is not very frequent—if riches be pursued from a love of gratification or evil tastes, which is very frequent—or if riches be pursued for the sake of influence, which is far more frequent—then they do not make a liberal-minded or generous man. So the appetite for knowledge may lead into many directions away from wisdom; and therefore it becomes necessary, while you acquire knowledge, to weigh the ends for which you are acquiring it.

There is a love of knowledge for its own sake which should be encouraged. The mind hath a dislike of ignorance, as the eye hath of darkness, or the limbs of confinement. The mind loves to look on the light of truth, and to roam in the freedom of its faculties. This is especially the case in the beginning of our years, and it is appointed for the best ends. As children will not be at rest, but, by ceaseless motion, nobody knows for what ends, acquire the ready use of all their limbs; so the mind in youth, by an innate restlessness, tries itself in every way, and ought no more to be hindered than the body ought to be confined. Education should be to the mind what exercise is to the body—an instrument for developing its powers; and, therefore, for many years, various food should be presented to the mind—some to the fancy, some to the memory, some to the judgment, much to affection, and much to piety. And so that a child is actively employed in putting forth its abilities, it is not then so necessary studiously to direct it to any end; but by-and-by, when a measure of strength hath been acquired, both of body and mind, as the strength of the body is directed to some labour, so the strength of the mind should be directed to some useful end.

Now it is, that knowledge begins to be the servant of wisdom, or the servant of vanity, or the servant of ambition, or the servant of wealth, according as you use it. If it be pursued in order to get a name among

the learned, then knowledge is degraded to be the servant of vanity. If it be pursued in order to use authority and power, then knowledge is degraded to be the servant of ambition. If it be pursued to come at place, pension, or reward, then it is most of all degraded to be the servant of mammon. It may serve pleasure also, and doth most frequently serve pleasure in your pursuit of books and entertaining discourse. But to make it serviceable to the ends of wisdom is a most noble and difficult undertaking, which it is our part, by God's help, now to set forth.

As wisdom consisteth in the promotion of our own well-being, and the well-being of other men, the desire of knowledge, it seems to me, should be prompted by the feeling of our own unhappiness: that is, our want of well-being, and the sight of unhappiness around us. And of these two, I give the preference to the former—the well-being and unhappiness of ourselves.

As far as the soul of man can reach, it is a rule, that every evil, whether in body or in mind, hath a remedy, if that remedy can be found. To find it out is the province of knowledge. Whatever evils, therefore, pursue us, let us gain knowledge to remove them. For the evils of the body there is a class of men to provide the cure, to whom it is better to trust than to seek for ourselves. Law, again, looks to the evils which come to our outward estate. But every one is left to find out for himself remedies for the evils which afflict his soul, his inward man; Let each man, therefore, look into himself, and see from what quarter unhappiness invades him: let him, by knowledge, find out the remedy; and having found it out, let him apply it. Then knowledge becometh wisdom. Next, let a man look around him on the unhappiness of others, beginning with those who most nearly concern himself; and extending as far outward as his time and fellow-feeling will go. Let him direct his faculties how he may remedy those evils which afflict his brethren; then let him apply the remedies which his knowledge hath discovered. This, also, is wisdom. When a man hath removed the evils that

afflict himself, and done his endeavour to remove those which afflict the men in his neighbourhood; then let him see by what means he can increase his spiritual enjoyment, and the spiritual enjoyment of those around him. Let him acquire and apply this knowledge, and then all his knowledge will be wisdom.

As the knowledge you have, or may acquire, both from the word of God and other quarters, is the noblest thing you call your own, if it be turned to these accounts which I have set before you; so it is the most vain, the most proud, the most domineering, and I may add, the most unhappy of all your possessions, if not employed in rectifying the diseases of your soul and your condition, and the souls and conditions of others. There is not a character under the sun so despicable as the man who sets out with the intention of making his knowledge a stepping stone to fortune and favour—to *live by his wits*, as it is termed—to honour the tastes and foibles of the public mind. It is a base calling, the basest of all callings; and it hath upon the mind that is given up to it, the most degrading effects. It is a most degrading traffic, inasmuch as the humours which it studies, and the prejudices to which it ministers, be not in the petty accommodations of the outward man, but in the opinion of the inward man, which determines not only our present, but our future destiny. It doth set up to sale, conscience, integrity, and counsel, and all the high moral and intellectual endowments of the mind, which, like the gift of God desired by Simon the sorcerer, cannot be purchased with money; and it is sacrilege to steal them. If we would avoid as a tainted man—if we would sequester from the common charities of life the abandoned wretch, who, for a bribe, in a public court, hath sworn the liberty or life of a fellow man—tell me, what form or measure of detestation and abhorrence doth that man merit, who, in bearing his witness before the great tribunal of the world, doth for a higher bribe suppress and falsify the knowledge and the convictions of truth which God hath implanted in his soul—doth so to the enslaving of the common

mind, and to the perishing of the eternal life, not of one, but of thousands?

Ah! little better is the man who makes his knowledge, his divine knowledge, a stepping stone to distinction, and who cannot proceed onward, unless he hath a crowd of admirers to applaud him. Such a man is preparing for himself, sooner or later, a bed of thorns—he is making of himself a butt for others to aim their shafts at; and many a venomous shaft of satire and censure shall stick sore in his loins before he reach the much courted place. This is degradation. His life will be jarring and contentious, his peace broken, his character laid bare, his privacy invaded, his quarrels set before the world: he shall have no mercy from his competitors, and shall find no sympathy from the spectators of the fray. And if he reacheth the courted seat, it is not till his temper is soured by competition, when he is fit only to play the tyrant, and not to enjoy his place.

Knowledge hath a state, a prerogative on which she needeth not to insist. Her state is to walk surrounded by contemplation, calmness, and truth; her prerogative is to dispel prejudice and ignorance; and her deference is the noblest gratitude of those whom we have brought out of darkness into light. These are the proper state, and prerogative, and homage of knowledge; but for a man of knowledge to claim and sue for external marks of honour is to cast the crown of glory from his head, and to humble himself into a mere man of power; it is to exchange the ethereal nature of his calling, for the vulgar attributes of place and of office. Nay, nothing will bear the character of a wise man up—nothing will set the possessor of knowledge in a state impregnable to all his enemies, and honourable to himself—nothing but that he hath an eye to his own deliverance from evil; and not his own alone, but of the whole world. Let us take the gain and honour which flow in upon us, and pray to God for economy to use the gain, and humility to bear the honour. But never, never let the man of knowledge deal out the treasures of his mind at the bidding of a purchaser, lest he sell over to his earthly

part that intellectual and spiritual part whereby he holds on heaven. Neither let men whose gifts and accomplishments are imperfections, and whose highest honour and ambition is to be humble, court preference when they consider of what weak and sinful creatures they are the brothers. Let a man pursue wisdom and help his brother out of his sins and imperfections, and then he shall constantly be moved on by the sight of their imperfections, and rewarded by the feeling of their imperfections removed. He dwelleth not on what he hath done, but on what remaineth to be accomplished. He looks not on the things that are behind, but on the things that are before. His reading, his thoughts, his conversations, are all bent to know his imperfections, to find out a remedy, and to discover the cure; and the remedy is no sooner found, than he endeavoureth to apply it—and so knowledge becomes wisdom.

Therefore, men and brethren, I entreat each one of you, that whatever knowledge any one possesseth at present (and there is no one without a large store of knowledge compared with total ignorance)—we exhort you to convert that knowledge into wisdom, by devoting it to the removal of the evils and troubles which afflict ourselves. Consider yourselves on all sides; observe where you are afflicted. Each one will find a number of evils under which he is groaning, and whereby he is disgraced. Apply this knowledge to the removal of wicked habits, such as swearing, and lying, and drunkenness, and chambering and hypocrisy. There is no one of you so untutored as not to know the remedy for these things. The deliverance cometh from the Spirit and word of God, by the use of those means of prevention which God hath put within our reach. Then use this knowledge and you shall be wise—use it not, and you shall be twice condemned; according to that saying of Jesus Christ, “If I had not come and spoken unto them they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin.”

Whosoever, then, is so afflicted with wicked propensities (which are the diseases of the soul) should apply to the

Lord for strength, and to the word of the Lord for knowledge; and he should keep himself what he can from every occasion of offence: he should part company from the profligate, idle, and profane, and company with the most honest men he can find: he should banish all books which cover such vices with the gloss of sentimental inagery, or the glory of splendid success; he should form acquaintance with the writings of noble men, of virtuous men, and of religious men; and he should inquire after such treatises as may beget a love, and encourage a pursuit of things lovely, and of good report. So, by diligence, he will convert the knowledge of the remedies of his diseases into the cure of those diseases, and so grow into the condition of a wise man. For being clear of youthful lusts, which war against the soul, you should suffer fear from a fretful, inquiet temper of irritability, of sensitiveness from pride humbled, from vanity mortified, from ambition beaten back, from policy outwitted, or expectations defeated. Then you know the remedy, the only remedy, that is in putting your fractious rebel nature into discipline of God. You know that religion should be to the thoughts within the breast, what the queen bee is to the hive—their parent and their mistress; for upon the loss of religion, as upon the loss of the queen bee, there ensueth wild disorder and troubles—no stirring industry—no security of abiding counsel; but on the contrary, certainty of discord and desolation.

Now, I shall not say that every one knoweth that religion hath such virtues over the troubled breast; but of this I am sure, many there be present who both know and are convinced of it, and do yet turn their knowledge to no account of wisdom or of happiness, by regulating themselves according thereto. Those who have fear of their double punishment in sinning against light and the peace of their troubled spirit, I charge not thus to abuse their precious information; for which information heathen lands cry in vain to heaven with the voice of all their sufferings, and of all their sorrows.

Oh! that men would forgo their la-

mentations over fortune, and hope, and wouldly happiness, shipwrecked in this unhappy world; and plucking from their bosom the key of knowledge, which rusteth there unused, would apply it, in the strength of God, to unlock the gates of immortality and blessedness. Then it should come to pass that the kingdom of heaven would bring all things in its train—hope for better things that would brighten over the darkness of present losses—ambition, heavenly ambition, would fire the heart to the quest of immortal crowns and everlasting thrones; and the voice of self-approbation, sweeter than the shouts of an applauding people, would make all joyful within the breast; and all the roughness of temper would sweeten and soften under the keeping of a good and happy heart; and out of ruins a temple would arise, with songs of everlasting joy. The knowledge that religion hath such a powerful wand to regenerate abject nature withal, lieth, I say, in many a wounded and sorrowful breast—it lieth unremembered, it lieth unblest; even as the key of promise lay in the bosom of Hopeful, while he and Christian were confined in the dungeons of Doubting castle. And if, like him, you will pluck it forth, and use it for your salvation, be assured that nothing more would remain to set you at liberty from the bondage of all such troubles.

There are many here present, I am sure, who feel oppressed with the grievances of disappointment and unrest; but not acting from this remedy which resides in the gospel of Jesus Christ, they seek their refuge in idle reading, or in laughter creating amusement, or in gay and flaunting vanity in the world of fashion and of taste. Oh, brethren! these do but cheat the short time, they do but chase the impending waves; even as the mariners, when the leak is making, and the ocean is sucking down the ship the wretched men, bursting control, hasten to kill thought with intoxication to the wild dance of terror. Away, away, from these the worldly cures—they are no remedy. Away, away, with gay company—away with levity—away with boisterous wit, and ridicule, and contempt of what is

grave and thoughtful! These are the opiate draughts which, being persisted in, bring on rugged disease, and plant despair. Take to counsel, take to ministry of counsel; talk to the world about you: learn and discover where peace and contentment have their dwellings—where wretchedness and misery have their howling abodes. Gather knowledge from facts around you; see where quiet evenings and healthful mornings shine—(not with midnight dance and morning revels)—go round and see—take not my word for it—go round and see where hollow-heartedness dwells, and foul pretence, and where puppetry of human nature hold its range. You shall find it to be where religion, and wisdom, and gravity have been hooted out of doors. These guardian angels of men must be banished first, and honest sentiment must learn to hide its head in shame; solemn truth must be thrust down into the earth; the name of God must be taught to turn agist, or to deepen an execration, or to fill up the frequent chasms of poverty-stricken discourse, before these gay allurements can be got up, to which the world in its wisdom carries a dejected countenance, stricken mortally.

Whenever these scenes occur to you, brethren, read for their cure and removal. Get knowledge—search the word of God—dig the wells of knowledge—beat the fields of knowledge for a remedy. Rest not till you have found diseases like your own, brought under by the chief physician. For this, let libraries be ransacked—not for light and airy speculations, which, however graceful, yield no happiness—which, however amusing, afford no spiritual gain. Be at charges with your soul as with your body. If any pain seize your body, you straightway submit to confinement, to pain, and to cruel operations. But when the mind languisheth, when the mind is deformed by unseemly vice, which we strive to hide, and which is odious to our own thoughts, we seek for no medicine, we consult no man's skill in spiritual cures; but we give ourselves up to random influence, yea, rush into the snare where we caught the foul infection, as if we

loved what we hated, and delighted in what cost us sorrow.

It is shameful to see how the knowledge that appertains to our peace lies in our mind like nursery tales, despised and disregarded. Christian men have secrets to convert earth into heaven, and to occupy the soul with the enjoyment of heaven. Christian men have secrets to chase away every form of evil that assails us from the deep beneath, and unbinds us from every carnal and earthly passion, to people the soul with thoughts of the world to come, and to make the wilderness of human life to rejoice and blossom as the rose. But these secrets are postponed by every transient current story, to every idle romance, to the wildest fancies, and to the wickedest wit. They are to the ear like waste sounds; they that utter them must season them with something savory, with something harmonious and melodious, in order that they might find acceptance. And the book that holds them lies as a sable messenger of guilty tidings. Meanwhile, the song of sweet sentiment, and the voluptuous poem are hung over with delight; and the dramatic tale is devoured, and the story of ancient times is unrolled, and the daily sheet of news is reached with hungry impatience, and every form of knowledge within the limits of fancy and folly hath a joyful welcome. And what serveth merry songs!—what serve adventures of unreal stories!—what serve all the paltry accidents and incidents of political and fashionable life? “They *while* the time away.” Do not be afraid of that, it will soon come to an end. They give the seal to knowledge, they kindle party feuds, and awaken hell within the breast of a man; and they sport away the spirit of a man with dreams and fantasies, of which, though he live a thousand years, he shall never realize one.

Oh, what a sight, if with one consent we sought into the troubles of our spirit, and gave ourselves to reason, and thinking, and conversation, in order to amend one another; every one dwelling at home in his own breast—every one inhaling stores of vital knowledge to purify and awaken his spiritual life! How wise,

how worthy should we become by the grace of the Spirit of God! How sincere were our intercourse—how frank our communications—how close our communion with God—how constant our application to the treasures of his wisdom and grace! Do let me advise you, fellow Christians and fellow men, to take this subject into your serious thought, and to make your present knowledge instrumental to your peace by acting thereon; to select your books with a desire to grow in the image of God, and shine in the beauty of holiness. Then shall you increase in wisdom as you increase in years, and pass your life in blessedness, and become, when you depart, as the angels of God, whom you shall know even as they are known.

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THE EXECUTIONER'S TRUMPET.

JEROME used to say, that it seemed to him as if the trumpet of the last day was always sounding in his ears, saying, “Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment.” The generality, however, think but little of this awful and important period. A Christian king of Hungary, being very sad and pensive, his brother, who was a gay courtier, was desirous of knowing the cause of his sadness. “Oh, brother,” said the king, “I have been a great sinner against God, and know not how to die, or how to appear before God in judgment!” His brother, making a jest of it, said, “These are but melancholy thoughts.” The king made no reply; but it was the custom of the country, that if the executioner came and sounded a trumpet before any man's door, he was presently led to execution. The king, in the dead of night, sent the executioner to sound the trumpet before his brother's door; who hearing it, and seeing the messenger of death, sprang into the king's presence, beseeching to know in what he had offended. “Alas! brother,” said the king, “you have never offended me. And is the sight of my executioner so dreadful, and shall not I, who have greatly offended, fear to be brought before the judgment-seat of Christ?”

## SERMON XVI.

### THE APPROPRIATION AND INFLUENCE OF REVEALED TRUTH.

BY REV. JOHN ANDERSON.

*"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but the things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."—Deut. xxix. 29.*

THE desire of knowledge is natural to the human soul; it is implanted within man by his almighty Creator: but, as it is in the hands of a finite and depraved creature, it may be perverted, and ought to be directed. By setting bounds to this desire, God maintained his dominion over man; by exciting this desire, the tempter succeeded to allure man from God, and ultimately destroyed his peace.

While, however, we are allowed to seek after knowledge, it becomes necessary that we should be kept within due limits; especially as man seems disposed to carry his pursuits beyond those limits. It cannot, surely, appear unreasonable, that Jehovah should have his arcana—that there should be a region into which he retires in his own sovereignty—a region into which no finite mind can penetrate, though it is confessedly full of the most interesting objects. The history of our nature has divulged the sad fact, that man does not approve of a restraint like this. He would trench the sacred enclosure of Deity, and invade the prerogative of heaven. This, however, is not to be tolerated; for as "the secret things belong unto God," we should aim to submit our minds to this economy. And let us aim to do this. God does us no harm by this arrangement; we sustain no injury. God has manifested his mercy, by revealing to us subjects which are more suited to our capacities, and concealing only those which we cannot comprehend. We expose ourselves to imminent danger, while we step over the line between what is

limited and what is allowed. Such were the views entertained by a prophet of God, who well knew what was in human nature. He saw this spirit stirring in man; he beheld it rising in opposition to the will of God; and he meets this disposition, and says, "*The secret things belong unto the Lord our God.*"

My brethren, I solicit an interest in your prayers, that God's blessing may be upon us while I appear before you to advocate the cause of mankind; for, says my text, "*those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.*" Waving, then, as we ought to do, the consideration of the things that belong to God, let us attend to our own rights. Let us regard, first, their character; and secondly, the validity of our claims to them.

First, LET US ATTEND TO THE CHARACTER OF OUR RIGHTS.

"The things that are revealed." This was originally spoken of that portion of truth which was at that time committed to the Jews. But as that outline of truth is more than filled up in the gospel, we need not apologize for applying it to the whole system of truth and grace which is made known to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are called "*revealed things.*" I love this designation; for,

1. It conducts us to the *mysterious nature of our rights*. They are revealed things; they are not the result of human reasonings, however deeply pursued—however long continued. They are re-

revealed things; things, therefore, of a divine and mysterious nature. Now, they are called "the purposes of God;" then, "the mystery of his will;" at one time, "the deep things of God;" at another, "the will of God;" and again, "the wisdom of God in a mystery." Paul, when speaking of it, gives us this comprehensive summary of its nature:—"Howbeit, we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory, which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." Now this should ever be understood by us as constituting a fair character of the things that are revealed; that they were the proceeds of the infinite intelligence of Deity—that they are surrounded by ineffable grandeur and mysterious glory—that they come forth to us, not as the results of human reason—that they are revealed to us in infinite mercy by God himself—made known to man, who else must have groped in darkness, and have perished for ever. And this character of *revealed things* applies to every part of gospel truth. If we look at the being and attributes of God—a trinity in unity—the God-man Mediator—his sacrifice and atonement—the effects of faith in that atonement—the doctrine of a future resurrection—and all, in fact, that is called *revelation*—we shall see how much they are above the level of mere human intellect, how truly they are styled the mysterious things of God, and how evidently they all bear the mark and character of divinity. "The things that are revealed!" I love this designation; because,

2. It marks our religious immunities *in the glory of their manifestation* If  
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they be revealed, let us remember that God only could reveal them; and he has. They are truly *revealed*, or manifested things. The world has been the scene of divine manifestations from the beginning. The Bible is a history of manifestations. Faithful men have been raised up from time to time, for the express purpose of making known the will of God. There is nothing which man knows about God—nothing in reference to his present condition, or his future state—nothing which respects the great salvation—nothing which is dear to us, as sinners—but what has been communicated to us by God himself, from the beginning until now. This revelation began with the first man; it travelled down through a variety of dispensations; and at length it was perfected in the everlasting gospel, according to that memorable record—"God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in times past unto the fathers, by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son." So that whether we look at the various modes of communication—whether we listen to the voice of God in the garden—or turn our thoughts to dreams, and visions, and temporary revelations—or think on institutions that are more permanent—we learn that God has had communications with man; and all that man knows bears upon it the character of a divine revelation. And I love this character; for,

3. It points out *the transcendent importance of them*. They are "revealed" things. O, if we look at these things separately; if we think of God—of Christ our Mediator—of the gospel—of the Spirit to apply its truths; if we consider the influence of these things on man—on the illumination of his understanding—the rectitude of his spirit—the purity of his conduct—the peace of his conscience—we should from all these catch a portion of evidence, which, when accumulated, would form a mass convincing and overpowering. Can we reflect on all the important results of all our immunities being regarded as a divine revelation? For instance, what *clearness* is thus imparted to them! If God speak for the benefit of man, we may be sure he will



speak in an intelligible manner. What *certainty* does it impart to them! They are not the doubtful deductions of human reason—of gigantic intellect—of enlarged stores of erudition. No: they are a revelation from God. It is to this cause we trace the failure of all other hypotheses, however splendid; they failed, because they wanted the essential character of a revelation from God. What *grandeur*, too, does this imprint on our rights! They have features of simplicity, it is true, but of dignity also. They are the word of God—God speaking to men! God himself, bringing the charter of our privileges in his own hand! God, proclaiming his will concerning us, from the excellent glory! And from the moment that God caused his voice first to vibrate on the ears of man—in all the promises he has made—in all the predictions which his prophets uttered, in the voice of the harbinger of the great Messiah—in the voice of Christ himself when he sojourned on our earth, and in the voice of all his apostles and preachers—we have proof that all our privileges are characterized by all that is great—by all that is dignified. Nay, what *authority* is imparted to them by this circumstance! The revelation of God! Yes; this was what all the hypotheses which have been made known to men wanted—namely, authority. But our privileges are revealed, and they bear the stamp and seal of the King of kings and Lord of lords. They are all marked as announcements to man of the will of the everlasting God. Wherever we turn, “Thus saith the Lord” vibrates on our ears; and we fall down and adore, while it is said, “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord”—the Lord incarnate! and after its authority had been thus established, “was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and

with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.”

O, brethren, let us look at our rights and immunities, thus distinguished—thus “revealed;” and if you have a spark of intellect—if you have any ability to investigate—if you are at all capable of comparing things that differ; then will you cheerfully, gladly, willingly, give the palm to your religious immunities.

We have heard much of “*the rights of man*;” a great deal has been said and written on the rights of people and the rights of princes: but, without denying that these rights have their importance—an importance which should never be taken from them—there are no rights which concern us as immortal creatures—as men destined to live for ever—as those which are made known to us by divine revelation. These are the rights to which the text refers; those rights which have been revealed by such a grand apparatus of means, and all of which are characterized by so much grandeur, simplicity, importance, and authority. I say again, if we are capable of comparing the various objects that are presented to our minds, we shall rejoice to hear that “the secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but the things which are revealed *belong unto us*.” And we will endeavour to ascertain,

*Secondly, THE VALIDITY OF OUR CLAIMS TO THESE IMMUNITIES.*

They “belong unto us;” so it is said in the text. But what is the ground of our claim to the things that are revealed? It cannot be *natural* to us, considering us abstractedly, *as men*. It is true, indeed, that there began to be a system of revelation and communication from the first, to sinless and innocent man. But the things which are revealed *to us* contain much, certainly, which was not adapted to man in his first state. This revelation could not belong to man, then, as he was created. And though we are *sinners*, and this revelation is made to us as sinners; still, the fact of our sinfulness could give us no claim to such a revelation; no claim to a revealed God—to a revealed Saviour—to a revealed heaven—to a revealed immortality. No; we can support no claim,

either natural or meritorious. How then are these things ours? Simply—simply because of the sovereign will of God. That will has been employed in reference to us. Guided by infinite wisdom, prompted by infinite love, its determinations have issued in the birth of a Saviour, and, through him, in the repurchase of our former inheritance. It was *given to us* by God himself: first, in promise; then in the oath by which he confirmed that promise; ultimately, in the gift of Christ: and this gift of Christ himself was the pledge that all which God had promised should be ours. God “spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all,” and will therefore, “with him, freely give us all things.” We take our stand here, then; we have a right to these things because God has bestowed them on us, in covenant—by his mercy—by free donation. Looking on the world in its hell-deserving condition, while travelling on to damnation, he entered into gracious covenant with Christ, and all the world; “for there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus: who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” Jesus Christ was not merely the fountain of revelation, but the head: by his voluntary sacrifice of himself in our behalf, he acquired a right for us; so revelation and all its blessings became ours.

Now, among all the creatures God has formed, whether residing in heaven, or the inhabitants of planets discovered or unknown, where shall we find a people that can lay claim to these things equally with ourselves? He by whom they were bought, is “bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh,” the Son of God and the Son of man. Christ is ours, and the things which reveal him are ours; the sun is ours, and all the rays of that sun are ours; the fountain is ours, and all its streams are ours; “Emanuel, God with us,” is ours; and hence all else is ours also.

Revelation itself does not warrant any other beings to lay claim to its truths, but us. There is no intimation that it was designed for a superior race of beings, but rather on the contrary; though men have often speculated curiously upon this

point. Nor is there any reason for supposing that its blessings will extend to the brute creation; though good men have entertained such an idea. All these things are ours, because “the word which was with God, and which was God, was made flesh, and dwelt among us; so that we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

But, besides this, we have other and collateral grounds of claim. In proof that the things that are revealed belong unto us, I would appeal,

1. *To their astonishing adaptation to our circumstances.* There is, in this respect, a striking connexion between the mercy announced, and the state of human beings. Take a summary of revealed truth, and bear it to human beings wherever you find them; let but the light beam upon their minds, let but the truth be revealed to them, and it finds something in the heart, and conscience, and understanding, which responds to it; something which forms a collateral argument that the things revealed *belong* to them. This is not theory, but fact. Wherever the gospel is borne, on whatever wind of heaven, there we find darkness chased by light—guilt met by its Saviour—uncertainty done away by the life which it brings to light—all incompetency met by the power of the gospel—and those who listen to it raised to the level of intelligent and redeemed men. We appeal further,

2. *To the legitimated means of their transmission.* God has not left the truths of revelation to themselves, to make their own way, and subdue the world to obedience. Men may talk of the force of truth, and say that it is great, and must ultimately prevail; yet truth, in order to its final triumph, has to contend with all the corruptions of the human heart. God has not left the truth to find its way, without making provision for its communication to the beings for whom it was designed; and all the means which he has employed cast a light upon the fact that they belong to us. Where the truth effects the conversion of an individual, that individual makes the change known to another; a church is formed; the members of that

church are removed in various directions; and thus God causes his truth to make its way throughout the whole earth. Again: God has not left his truth to float on the stream of tradition, liable to be injured or impaired; but has given it the tangibility, shall I say?—the certainty, the palpableness, of a *written revelation*. God has caused his will to be recorded in a written form, and so handed down from man to man. What shall I say of a *standing ministry*, to explain and enforce these various truths in the hearing of men from time to time? What shall I say to the injunction given to parents to teach these things to their children; “that the generations to come may know them, who shall arise and declare them to their children; that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.” Look at the nature of these divinely instituted means, and say, if you have not proofs that the things which are revealed belong to man. I refer you,

3. *To the wonderful preservation of these things.* How wonderfully has God taken care to preserve his truth pure and unadulterated, notwithstanding the prevalence of error—the tyranny of passion—and the cruelty of persecution. Think of the numerous foes that have been raised against the truth—pagans, who have aimed to destroy it, and papists, who have monopolized it. Think of popes and of devils—of some who have held fast the key of knowledge, and others who have corrupted it according to their own fancies. What do we see, but God himself holding the charter of our liberties in his own hands, and causing even the fire of persecution to induce us to retain our grasp of his revelation more firmly. What has not died away? Nations and empires have been overthrown—the thrones of princes have been undermined; they have fallen, and great has been the fall. Philosophers and their systems have vanished away. The world has been one continued scene of change, alteration, and destruction: but the word of God has remained the same. While whole nations have passed away; while “the city has become a heap, and the

defenced city a ruin;” the truth which emanated from God has been preserved, and has shone brighter and brighter. The stream which, at the first, bubbled up at the foot of the eternal throne, has rolled silently on, increasing in majesty as it passed along, gathering strength from the very means employed to obstruct its course; now gliding unseen through subterraneous channels—then proceeding, softly and slowly, like the waters of Shiloh—and anon bursting forth like an American cataract, and rolling on with a mighty rapidity, bearing down before it each opposing barrier; declaring to the astonished children of men, that while “all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass, the word of the Lord endureth for ever.” While men have stood upon its brink, and been compelled to exclaim, “We have seen an end of all perfection!” it still flows on, fertilizing and blessing all its banks. “The word of the Lord by the gospel is still preached,” furnishing a miraculous proof that “the things which are revealed belong unto us.” And what if I conduct you, in further proof of this point,

4. *To the influence of these things upon the nature of man.* I often think on what would have been the state of the world, if these things had not been revealed. O, brethren, our living in the light of this truth makes it as familiar to us as our A, B, C; and tends to make us forget the condition of those who are destitute of it. O, what a region approximating to that of hell—what a wilderness of sorrow and of woe—would this nation have been, if God had never illuminated it with his revelation! This may be inferred from the state of those who have but a portion of this truth, in comparison with that of those who are altogether destitute of it. Look at the influence of the things that are revealed on the intellectual—the political—the domestic—the religious relations in which men stand.

On the *intellectual* condition of men. The things that are revealed have enlarged the sphere of knowledge. Religion has expanded the intellect, even where it has not changed the heart. It has a tendency to refine, where it does not save. I will

not undertake to say what have been its effects on science, and literature, and the liberal arts; but it is enough to offend one, to see the votaries of intellect and literature strutting in peacock dignity, when it could be clearly proved that all the knowledge which they possess is derived from the things that are revealed. They have stolen fire from the altar of God, and have astonished others, while they have never been ingenuous enough to confess the theft. They have paraded in pomp before their fellow mortals, forgetting that the fairest feathers which they have ever worn have been those plucked from the bird of paradise. But for this, they would have had nothing—they would have been nothing. If God had not spoken from heaven, and revealed his will to men, they would still have been in gross intellectual darkness.

What shall I say of its *political* influence? What has not revelation done for the establishment of genuine liberty! From the mountain of revelation, the sweetest breezes of freedom have been wafted. The tree of liberty, beneath whose ample shadow we have lived, and by whose fairest fruit we have been fed, was sown by God himself in his revelation; and it owes its elevation and grandeur entirely to the truth which he has made known.

Think of its influence on the *domestic* relation. And all that is sweet in the name of home; all that is connected with the names of father, child, husband, wife, master, servant; all that is considered desirable to meet with in our intercourse with men, in our communion with each other; is derived from the things which God has so graciously made known to men.

Look upon the *religious* state of man. O God! who but thyself can tell what has been the influence of thy truth upon the mind of man? It has poured a flood of light upon the darkness of the understanding—it has given patience in affliction, and satisfaction in disappointment—it has afforded direction in perplexity, and support in feebleness—it has revealed that heaven, where the Christian shall rest from his labours, when he shall return

with singing unto Zion, and everlasting joy upon his head.

"*The things that are revealed!*" Who can thus trace their influence, (and this is a mere sketch,) and not see in all this a strong, clear, satisfying proof that God designed all these things for us? and not say with pleasure and gratitude, "the secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but the things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever!"

My brethren, if these be our rights, and if our claims can be so supported, should we not next ask, *how does it become us to use these rights?* We are certainly not to hold them *in ignorance* of their nature: we are not to suppose that they are given merely to distinguish us from those by whom we are surrounded. They are surely given to us *to promote our individual benefit*. If this revelation be sealed with the broad seal of heaven, and presented to us in an intelligible form, how ought we to aim at knowing the things it contains; that what it reveals may be enjoyed on the one hand, and obeyed on the other! We are to search these divine oracles, till their force is felt on our hearts, and their import treasured up in our recollection. Highly, greatly as God has distinguished us by these rights, this will only issue in our aggravated woe, if we should be found walking in the ways of darkness. Let us not be *hearers* of the truth only—let us not be content with *looking* at the "perfect law of liberty," and *admiring* it merely; let us look and admire, but let us also "continue therein;" that we may not be forgetful hearers, but "*doers of the work.*"

Again: If these be our rights, and if they belong to *our children*, and to our children's children, what care should we take to *transmit them without corruption to the succeeding generation*. We often read of the enthusiastic ardour of those who have advocated our rights—who have not merely thundered in the senate, but have shed their blood on the scaffold; and while we have seen these martyrs in the cause of civil liberty, and martyrs in the cause of Christ, thus fearlessly and freely yielding up their lives, how have we

admired, nay, almost envied, the men who were able to manifest such zeal and patriotism! But *why* did they act thus?—that we, and those who came after us, might enjoy those liberties which they esteemed more valuable than liberty or life; and shall not we transmit them to our children, and to those that may come after us, “that they also may set their hope in God, and keep his commandments?”

This is your work. It is for an institution which is designed to carry these purposes into effect, that he who addresses you has now to plead. An incompetent pleader he confesses himself; but one who feels that something like the whole energy of zeal should be thrown into his subject, while he has to plead the rights of children. You are called to take care of the children of the poor—some of them your neighbours and some not—in order that you may give them a portion of education. A great deal has been said about education—a great deal has been said loosely, a great deal foolishly, about it. Education may be, and in some cases is, a great evil: but a *Christian education*—and this is your work—is that by which you may serve your generation, your country, your God. In no other way can you turn education to a good account, but by teaching them the truth of God.

We speak to you in language sounding from the throne of heaven—in language addressed to you through the medium of the Jewish lawgiver, surrounded by the congregated thousands of Israel. “Hear, O Israel! the words which I command thee this day shall be in *thine heart*.” This is to be our first care; and “*thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children*; and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up: and thou

shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand; and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes; and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.” Thus giving the greatest publicity to them, that the generation to come might know them, and seek after God, and love him and serve him with all their hearts. And while we understand these things, and find them to be all *our* joy and all *our* desire, let us be glad that there are so many advocates of these truths of God. We live in a day in which much opposition is made to pure and undefiled religion: but as the truth has outlived all the efforts of the prince of darkness, and gathered strength from the very opposition which has been made to it, it shall still be so to the end of time. It has defied all the sophistries of Hume, and the eloquence of Gibbon, and the vituperations of Voltaire, and the invectives of Rousseau, and the blasphemy of Paine; and when all their names shall have been written in the dust, or appear on the roll of history as awful instances of depraved intellect and perverted talent—the TRUTH shall stand unsullied and uninjured before God. And while all that the malignant heart of the infidel prompts him to, shall have failed of its effect, and died away, the truth shall give its suffrages for the welfare of men to the very ends of the earth: Christians shall say, “Come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord; for the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and people shall flow unto it; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks.”

May God further, by your means, and by the united means of all Christians, this glorious consummation, and fulfil the truth of the text in your experience. Amen.

## SERMON XVII.

### THE EXAMPLE OF THE ANCIENT SERVANTS OF GOD.

BY THE HON. GERARD T. NOEL, M. A.

*“That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises”*  
Heb. vi. 12.

In this fallen world every thing good is acquired with difficulty, and retained with danger. Many fatigues, anxieties, and sorrows, make up that amount of effort which realizes even the objects of earthly ambition. In spiritual and heavenly pursuits, the same labour is essential, and the same peril attends enjoyment; but then that enjoyment is not subject to the same ultimate forfeiture. These are objects of pursuit, at once of high intrinsic excellence, and of perpetual duration; but still they are difficult of acquirement.

In reference to this difficulty of attainment, the apostle requires that we be “not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

Let us with God's blessing contemplate here, in the first place,

I. THE IMPORTANT FACT, THAT MANY OF OUR FELLOW-CHRISTIANS HAVE THROUGH FAITH AND PATIENCE INHERITED THE PROMISES OF GOD; and

II. THE VALUE OF THEIR EXAMPLE TO OURSELVES.

I. Let us first consider the assurance of the apostle, THAT MANY HAVE ATTAINED THE PROMISES OF GOD.

To those who are familiar with the Scriptures, I need not say that every thing good and productive of happiness in this world, is the free gift of God. By this I do not simply mean that the original grant of life, with all its blessings, was to us a free benefit from God; but beyond this, that sin, having deprived us of that benefit, and exposed us to the most aggravated

evils, every degree of comfort, and every mitigation of evil, which we now enjoy, is the free and gratuitous gift of grace. We are criminals in a state of condemnation and forfeiture; but as such we are the objects of God's compassion. The promise of mercy consoled the first transgressors; and this promise has been always guarded from oblivion, and in every succeeding age has become the source of hope to the world. The great value of this promise respected a Mediator, by whom the tremendous effects of sin are averted from the penitent. Repentance, indeed, and the renewal of the heart to holy love, are among the most valued blessings conferred by this mediator. During many a long year this promise of pardon, and peace, and eternal life, was made known to a very limited number of mankind; but when at length the Mediator came in human flesh, who was none other than “God over all, for ever blessed;” and when he had finished his work of mercy and of atonement, he commissioned his disciples to go into all the world, and to tell the tale of mercy to every creature; to preach the assurance of remission of sins through his name, and the restoration of all, and more than all to man, of which sin had robbed him. “I am come, that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” Since the day in which this commission was given to the disciples, thousands and tens of thousands, in various countries, have believed the promises of God, and through Christ, the great subject of these promises, have

found rest unto their souls. They have relied on his efficacious atonement. They have been renewed by his Spirit, comforted by his grace, borne triumphantly through the perils of the world, and we doubt not have reached that perfect security and joy which is prepared for those who have been faithful unto death.

Surveying then the crowded pathways of human life, and marking the guilt, and sorrow, and degradation which is every where apparent, it is a high consolation to think of the clear escape which these at least have made from suffering and sin. These have actually inherited the promises. They "sleep in Jesus." They are "with Christ." They are made "perfect in love." They are placed beyond the hazards and the pains of this lower world.

It is however very material to remark, that the attainment of the promises was the result "of *faith* and *patience*." It was no light struggle which they were called to endure. Oftentimes against the evidence of external sense; oftentimes amidst the scorn and contempt of men, they clung to the sayings of God. Exposed to the most cruel temptations, they yet believed the record of God, and through the aid of his arm of strength, they rendered to him the sacrifice which his wisdom claimed at their hands. They believed his assurances, that ultimate felicity would be found in allegiance to him; in the denial of the flesh; in purity of affections; "in the grace of Christ, in the love of God, and in the fellowship of the Spirit." They learned by this faith to esteem the "reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt;" to "seek a city to come, whose builder and maker is God;" to confess themselves to be "pilgrims and strangers upon earth," and to expect the trials which belong to such.

Nor were such trials of faith *few* or *momentary*. These men found the necessity for *patience* as well as for *faith*. "They had respect to the recompense of reward;" and with that reward in view, they "endured many a cruel mocking," many a bond, many a dreary captivity, and many a severe struggle with their own

corrupt propensities. "Out of many a depth they called upon God;" amidst many a swelling wave they besought him to lead them to "the rock which was higher than they." Thus they endured a great "fight of affliction," and patiently held on their way; expecting no rest on earth, but knowing that if "they endured to the end, they should be saved;" and they were saved. They were led forward by hope, and it "never made them ashamed." It was to them "the helmet of salvation," and it "covered their heads in the day of battle."

II. But let us, secondly, consider THE VALUE OF THEIR EXAMPLE TO OURSELVES. "And we desire," says the apostle, "that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end. That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." With some shades of difference, we are substantially placed in the same circumstances with those who now "rest from their labours." We inhabit, as they did, a world of sin and sorrow, with hearts prone to yield to the one, and to repine against the other. We are surrounded with incessant temptations, exposed to fearful enemies, allured by sense, indisposed to act by faith, ready to prefer present advantage to future recompense. We need, as they needed, pardon and peace with God; reconciliation through the great atonement; the renewing influence of divine grace; "the setting our affections upon things above;" the guardianship of Christ; the victory over the world; the patient allegiance which is "faithful unto death." We possess the same assurances with them, of the certainty of attaining these great and enduring blessings. All the strength, the courage, the faith, the resolution, the endurance which they exhibited, we require, and are invited to receive, at God's hand. No single promise connected with the great victory over sin, death, and the world, is repealed. These promises still live upon the pages of revelation, like beacon lights to direct the feet of the wanderer through the wilderness of time.

To us then, thus situated and exposed,

the example of the godly men of those elder days is of unspeakable value. The precepts of Scripture are very valuable; the promises of God are very refreshing; but the embodying those precepts, and the accomplishment of those promises, in the actual victory and salvation of God's servants, are yet more stimulating and effective to our support. They give actual evidence of the practicability of godliness. They are trophies erected in the enemy's country; monuments of a courage, and constancy, and a success, calculated to refresh the weary and the faint, who are combating in the same noble strife, and are anxious to win the day.

We have indeed the high and bright example of the great Captain of our salvation, "who endured the cross, and despised the shame;" and he ever lives before our eyes, at once the model, the leader, and the source of victory. But it is still auxiliary to our efforts to ascertain the efficacy of his strength, in the actual result of *their* lot, who once confided in his name. They, like ourselves, were once depraved, worldly, selfish, inconsistent, weak; but, united unto him, they became possessors of a "divine nature." They adopted the cause of truth and righteousness as their own. They linked their sympathies and their lot to those of their Master. They clung to his principles, and made them the luminous way-marks to their own conduct. They estimated the things of time by the standard which he had erected, and they were borne away from the decision of his law, by no current of human opinion, nor by any costliness of present sacrifice. They lived for eternity. They consecrated their all to God's glory. The love of Christ constrained them, and they thus judged, "that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again." They continued in this temper, and "their patient expectation was not cut off." They had peace in their life, and hope in their death, and they have entered into rest.

Are we then at any time harassed by temptation, and beat down by conflicts?

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Are we, my fellow Christians, painfully conscious of our own inherent weakness? Have we already discovered by bitter experience the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of our hearts? Have we, in a life of varied occupation, and repeated calamity, and incessant struggle, found no single spot where we may repose in quietness and safety? Have we, after innumerable failures, perceived that in ourselves there is neither wisdom, nor integrity, nor truth, nor faith, but rather inconstancy and double-mindedness, and mistrust and folly? Are we wearied with repetition of effort, and repetition of disappointment? Does the combat seem almost vain, and the full victory as far removed as ever from our hearts? It may, under such circumstances, console and strengthen us to trace the footsteps of our fellow combatants, and to hear the history of their conflicts. They went through the same difficulties, and endured the same fatigue. The sword was ever in their hands, and they expected rest, not on earth, but in heaven. They were militant here to the last sigh they drew. They cast their aching eyes towards the future glory, and then threw themselves afresh into the battle, and fought their way to Zion. Oh! let it be recollected, that he who upheld their faith and patience, "is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Salvation is of grace, and God has connected the manifestation of his own glory with our ultimate rescue from all the severities of our condition.

Let then our weakness, our guilt, our inconstancy, produce humility, but not despair. "Greater is he that is for us," than those "who are against us." He will glorify himself in our redemption. He permits us to discern our own insufficiency, that we may rely upon his strength: he gives us the sentence of death in ourselves, that we may be incessantly indebted to him for life and vigour. Through him we shall "be made more than conquerors," for "all power is in his hands." "He has overcome the world." The sceptre of rebellion lies broken at the foot of the cross. Satan and the world are vanquished foes. Those who have reached the higher world, fully compre-

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And his victory. Let us wait, and we too shall share their conviction and their triumph; and the cause is worthy the struggle. The result of the victory will fully attest the wisdom of the strife.

I have already remarked, that every thing valuable requires a struggle. "They do it," says the apostle, "to acquire a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible." Let not then our expectations be inconsistent. Let us not be *slothful*. We are, indeed, little aware of the real nature of our spiritual dangers; but then we are as little aware of the value of eternal felicity, or of the might and compassion of our gracious Saviour and Redeemer. We require to increase our knowledge and our faith. We require to become "*patient*" followers of the saints. It is ours to contemplate more steadily eternal realities; to examine more closely the records of our religion; to search more deeply into the character of God; to expand our sympathies over the whole surface of heavenly truth; to gather courage from God's promises; to ply the throne of mercy with incessant prayers; "to quit ourselves like men;" "to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might;" to raise the uplifted hand of resolution, in order to cut off the offending member; in short, "to deny ourselves; to take up the cross, and to follow Christ."

This is indeed a struggle. I would not disguise the truth, that it is "through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God." God may call us to years of toil, and faith, and patience. We may be often ready, like Jonah, to fly from duty; like Joshua, to lie upon the ground in despondency; like David, after many an heroic effort, to cry, "I shall perish by the hand of Saul;" or, like the once intrepid Elijah, to retreat into solitude, and exclaim, "what good shall my life do me?" But, like these saints of old, let us also rally again to the spiritual combat. God refreshed their fainting spirits, and he will refresh ours likewise. "His arm is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear." Let us then "not be slothful, but be followers of the saints." "Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,

let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race which is set before us."

It may further *confirm* our confidence to remember, that if we shrink from God's trials, we expose ourselves to those of our enemies. We cannot stand on neutral ground. If, like Jonah, we refuse in any instance the service of the Lord, we so far take up the service of sin and Satan. Now, while their ultimate wages are ruin and death, their immediate results are affliction. Remorse, and shame, and self-contempt, and the "grieving the Spirit," are the unavoidable results of wilfully deserting, in any degree, the standard of God and of truth. Oh, better far, my fellow Christians, to combat still with pride, and passion, and ease, and worldliness; better far to go down into the grave with many a wound, and with our faces turned to the heavenly world, than to lull ourselves for a fatal moment amidst the dreams of sensual joy, only to wake amidst the terrible images of bitter contrition. "Yet awhile, and he who placed us in this scene of conflict will call us forth from the struggle;" yet a little while, and he that "shall come will come, and will not tarry:" for to those "that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation!" "Who *then* art thou that walketh in darkness, and hath no light, let him still trust in the Lord, and stay upon his God." "Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength: even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

But while we are looking to the elder times for high examples of courage and of allegiance, it ought likewise to be our anxious endeavour to offer similar examples to others in our own faith and patience. It ought to be our prayer, that

"our light may shine" with steady brilliancy upon the path of others. It ought not to content us to receive good; it ought to be our generous effort to do good. Many generations may yet succeed us in the struggles of life. With this reference, it ought to be our desire to cheer and to invigorate those who are feeble in faith than ourselves.

Let me speak then, in conclusion, to those who, through the grace of God, have taken their place in the world, and who have adopted a decisive course of desire and of pursuit. I would say to such, My brethren in Christ, you are on the Lord's side. Through grace you have remembered your vows of youth, and the early sign of the cross upon your foreheads. It is your desire to be faithful to the obligations under which Christianity has placed you, and to evince yourselves to be good "soldiers of the cross, fighting manfully under the banner of Christ, against the world, the flesh, and the devil." Upon these principles, are you then examples to those who are but commencing the conflicts of life? Are your maxims of conduct the clear and recorded decisions of God? Is your estimate of truth and error derived entirely from the Scriptures? Is the honour, the glory, the cause of Christ, as dear to you at one moment as at another? Are you growing in his grace, and knowledge, and love? Is there with you no false shame before the world? No flinching before the frown of man—no compromising of truth amidst the bold claims of falsehood? Are you seeking, with consistent effort, the full salvation of your souls? and is Jesus Christ, in very deed and reality, your honoured Master and your gracious friend? Is it your joy to uphold the wavering, to animate the timid, to encourage the faithful servant of your Lord? Have you given up every faculty of body and soul in holy consecration to Him who shed his blood for you? Are you advancing towards the close of life, as a light to the benighted, a staff to the weak, an example to the inexperienced and the timid? Are you "followers of God and the Lamb;" humbly anxious to be found "faithful even unto death?" Give these questions, I beseech you, their

just consideration, and live in habits of watchfulness and prayer!

There are, however, those who are called Christians—who are yet giving the strength of manhood, or the growing debility of age, exclusively to the pursuits of pleasure or of gain; and the young mark in such a fatal example of earthliness which they too well love to follow. Now such men are the abettors of a system of sin and of delusion which, if pursued, will rob them eternally of God's regard and of their own peace. I would earnestly say to such, "Has the gospel of Christ hitherto exerted no benign influence over your souls? Has the Redeemer's love carried no healing balm to your bosoms? and is the disease of sin still raging unhealed, and has no wish been solemnly felt, much less expressed, for a cure? And it may, perhaps, aggravate your guilt that you are parents, or the guardians of others. For what example are you offering to your children? You have never felt towards them the godly solicitude of Christian parents. Their conduct towards God—their spiritual character, has never been the subject of solicitude dear to your hearts. You are still careless of your own souls, and are still walking before your children in the broad path to destruction. Your examples have never drawn them one step towards God. Your lives are no friendly beacons to warn them of evil, and to illuminate the way to true felicity. But think, my brethren, how awful must be the wo ultimately due to him who shall use the authority of age, the counsels of maturity, the lessons of parental influence, or the attractions of fond affection; who shall use these advantages as instruments of moral power *against* the honour of God, and *against* the spiritual character of his children? On the other hand, think of the blessing which he shall receive, who, under the benign teaching of heavenly wisdom, shall prefer the interests of the soul to those of the body; the spiritual welfare of his offspring to their earthly fortune? Estimate his eternal recompense who shall bequeath to his children, in his dying hour, the rich memorials of his faith and hope, and who shall descend

into the grave the honoured servant of Christ, the firm "follower of those who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises!"

### THE PULPIT GALLERY.

NO. VIII.

THE HON. AND REV. GERARD T. NOEL, A.M.  
*Curate of Richmond, Surrey.*

"There is a beautiful symmetry in the religious character of such of the evangelical clergy as I have had an opportunity of knowing. The graces of piety are conspicuous in them; brotherly kindness and charity—tenderness and humility—the disposition that leads one to esteem others better than himself; a painstaking benevolence that can work without any impulse but that of its own zeal, steadily, silently, patiently; a habit of much secret communion with God in prayer, and the continual application of every question of doctrine or practice to the decision of the Scriptures, are the distinguishing features of the brethren of whom I speak."

BISHOP McILVAINE.

THE REV. G. T. NOEL is the son of Sir Gerard Noel, Bart. and the late Lady Barham. He completed his education at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he graduated about 1802. Several years ago he was presented to the vicarage of Rainham, in Kent, where he carefully instructed the people in the way of righteousness, exhibiting a fine example of piety and benevolence. To the rich he discharged the duties of his office with an affection and fidelity for which they will ever have reason to be thankful; while the poor and the afflicted will long remember with gratitude his deep sympathy, and his unwearied exertions to promote their spiritual and temporal advantages.

Mr. Noel as a preacher is evangelical and eloquent. In his sermons there is a happy union of doctrinal, experimental, and practical religion; an eager desire to convince his hearers of their nothingness, and of Christ's all sufficiency. Without any peculiar advantage of person—with a weak voice—with a plaintive and some-

what hesitating delivery—and with little or no action; he rarely fails of being highly interesting, and frequently rises to very considerable energy. His general strain is remarkably mild and persuasive—sincere and affectionate. His rank and connexions in life attract the attendance of many of the rich and great; and before them he dwells on the vanity of the world with the emphasis of one who feels that the fashion of this world passeth away.

In the success of those institutions which have for their object the glory of God and the salvation of man, Mr. Noel feels peculiar interest, and in their behalf is ever ready to plead, while he never shrinks from bearing an unfaltering testimony against false philosophy, and all corruptions of true religion. "Against these systems," said he on one occasion, "the systems that would fling back into the caverns of superstition, and ignorance, the torch of divine revelation, and leave the world in darkness, I will never withhold my voice of reprobation. No, while I have a tongue to speak, or an arm to lift up, I will use both in this holy and bloodless conflict."

Mr. Noel was one of the *earliest*, and has proved himself to be one of the warmest friends to the great effort of Missionary enterprise, and has been willing to link hand and heart with the good of every name, to extend the kingdom of Christ. In a sermon preached more than twenty years ago, he said, "Blessed be God for the things which we now hear, and the things which we now behold. Never did such sounds of concord vibrate on the Christian's ear. *The spell of party is broken*; and the deep rooted antipathies of education have been torn up. A mighty revolution of religious sentiment, strikingly designating the finger of God, has taken place; and tranquillity, long banished from the world, has been, I had almost said, miraculously restored. The wretched situation of millions has come up in remembrance before us; and every hand is lifted up to spread that gospel whose prophetic testimony has gone forth that the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ."

## SERMON XVIII.

### LIVING WITHOUT GOD IN THE WORLD.

BY THE REV. JOHN FOSTER.

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“Without God in the world.”—Eph. ii. 12

We have often occasion to wonder that brief expressions, descriptive of actual conditions of men, do not strike us far more forcibly—do not convey more to our thoughts, and awaken more emotion. For example: Suppose it to be said—“At this very time, this hour, even this moment, a great number of human beings are dying!” This is a positive fact. But what is it to die? What would it appear if I were with the dying man? What if I were in the act? But a great number are in this very situation. Think!—following their flight from the world. And suppose it to be said, “A multitude of human beings are now in heaven!” And again, (another solemn fact,) “A vast number are now in hell!” But, to revert to things on earth, let it be said, “Enemies to God.” There is a prodigious army of such!—or “Without God in the world.” Think!—what a description!—and applicable to individuals without number! If it had been without friends, shelter, or food, *that* would have been a gloomy sound. But *without God!*—without *Him*—(that is, in no happy relation to him)—who is the very origin, support, and life of all things;—without him who can make good flow to his creatures from an infinity of sources; without him whose favour possessed is the *best*, the *sublimest*, of all delights, all triumphs, all glories; without him who can confer an eternal felicity;—without *Him*—but how is he lost! What do those under so sad a destitution value and seek instead of him? What will any thing, or all things, be worth in his absence? Without him,

too, in a world where the human creature knows there is a mighty and continual conspiracy against his welfare. We fall unspeakably below the true and dreadful emphasis of the expression, even after we have given our utmost aggravation to its significance. And still it is but the description of an actual condition; and should not each one be intent on having good assurance that it is not his *own* condition!

It may be instructive to consider a little to what states of mind this description is applicable; and what a wrong and calamitous thing the condition is in all of them.

We need not dwell on that condition of humanity in which there is no notion of Deity at all—some outcast, savage tribes—souls destitute of the very idea! Not one idea exalted and resplendent above the rest, casting a glory sometimes across the little intellectual field! It is as if, in the outward world of nature, they had no visible heaven—the spirit nothing to go out to, beyond its clay tenement, but the immediately surrounding elements and other creatures of the same order. Think of a rational, and intelligent nature, debased, in these remote sections of the universe, to so melancholy an extreme!

The adorers of false gods may just be named as coming under the description. There is, almost throughout the race, a feeling in men's minds that *belongs* to the Divinity: but think how all manner of objects, real and imaginary, have been supplicated to accept and absorb this feel-

ing, that the true God might not take it! Men have been willing to fill the world—the universe, with gods, and do homage to them all, rather than acknowledge, and adore, and love “the blessed and only Potentate;” and a confirmed negation of him to the mind and the heart of man is the curse inflicted in return by all these infernal fallacies—an utter inaptitude to conceive the very idea!

It is too obvious almost to be worth noting, how plainly the description applies itself to those who persuade themselves that there is no God. We may believe some of them, on their own testimony, that they have attained to this deliberate opinion—to *them* there is no Supreme Intelligence in the universe. Mind—spirit—would evidently be the glory of all existence;—a superlatively precious and noble kind of being, in comparison with which all others are unspeakably insignificant. And then *one Supreme Spirit*, self-existent, and the author of all existence, would be the transcendent object of every admiring, adoring, and devoted sentiment. But to the atheist there is *nothing* in the place of that which is the supremacy of all existence and glory! The Divine Spirit and *all* spirit abolished, he is left amidst masses and systems of matter without a first cause—ruled by chance, or by a blind mechanical impulse of what *he* calls *fate*; and, as a little composition of atoms, he is himself to take *his* chance for a few moments of conscious being, and then be no more for ever! And yet, in this infinite prostration of all things, he feels an elation of *intellectual pride*!

But we have to consider the text in an application much more important to *us*, and to men in general: for, with a most settled belief of the Divine existence, they may be “without God in the world.” This is too truly and sadly the applicable description when this belief and its object do not maintain habitually the ascendant influence over us—over the whole system of our thoughts, feelings, purposes, and actions. That there is such a being is a principle that evidently claims to interfere in every thing. My very existence is from him, and depends

upon him; all it contains, and all its acts, must therefore be in a solemn relation to him; and every thing in my spirit and conduct should acknowledge that relation; that relation is to be maintained in such a manner as that I may be in harmony and conformity with him; that relation constitutes the law of good and evil; and fixes an awful sanction on the difference; in an endless series of things—that there is such a being, and that I belong to him, is a reason *for* one thing, and *against* another; the thought of him is to be associated with all these things, and its influence is to be predominant:—Thus and thus I think, and wish, and will, and act, *because there is a God*. Now, for me to forget or disregard all this, is to remove myself as far as *I can* from God—to cause, as far as I am able, that to me there is no God; it is a practical conformity to the atheist’s speculative unbelief. Let such a man ask himself, “If I proceed thus, ought not my *opinion* to be that of the atheist?” And let each man examine and judge whether there be not many things in his soul and his life which *require* this opinion in order to his being *consistent*. And let us all examine ourselves whether we live under a prevailing, powerful, all-pervading sentiment of God; or whether the thought of him be light, remote, unimportant, and very often absent altogether.

We wish we could describe with distinctness several of the ways or foras in which this disregard of God is seen to prevail. For one, we are placed amidst the amazing scene of his works, extending on all sides, from the point where we stand, to far beyond any thing we can distinctly conceive of—infinity—in such a diversity that eternal duration will not suffice to take account of all; having within one day, one hour, one instant, operations, changes, appearances, to which the greatest angel’s calculating faculty would be nothing—and all manifesting design, order, beauty, sublimity, utility. Such is the scene to be contemplated. But now, while our attention wanders over it, or fixes on parts of it, *do* we regard it but as if it were something existing of itself? Can we glance over the

earth, and into the wilderness of worlds in infinite space, without the solemn thought that all this is but the sign and proof of *something* infinitely more glorious than itself? Are we not reminded—"This is the production of his almighty power"—*that* is an adjustment of his all-comprehending intelligence and foresight—*here* is a glimmer, a ray of his beauty, his glory—*there* an emanation of his benignity—but for *him* all this would never have been; and if, for a moment, his pervading energy were by his will restrained or suspended, what would it all be then?" Not to have some such perceptions and thoughts, accompanied by devout sentiments, is, so far, to "be without God in the world." And that there should be men who can survey the creation with a *scientific* enlargement of intelligence, and then say, "there is no God," is the most hideous phenomenon in the world.

Again, the text is applicable to those who have no solemn recognition of God's all-disposing government and providence—who have no thought of the course of things but as just "*going on*"—going on some way or other, just as it can—to whom it appears abandoned to a strife and competition of various mortal powers; or surrendered to something they call general laws, and then blended with chance; who have, perhaps, a crude Epicurean notion of exempting the Divine Being from the infinite toil and care of such a charge; or think they see things managed so *wrong*, that there *cannot* be a constant interference of sovereign power and wisdom—who do not discern and understand the indications manifested in some instances, and have no faith with respect to the darker parts of the system; who, with respect to their own lot, feel themselves as committed to an unaided struggle and fight with difficulties, enemies, and accidents; and who have no habitual trust or hope in the providential wisdom and care. If God *be* in the world with an all-pervading providence, those who do not acknowledge it really and practically are "*without him in the world.*"

The text is a description of all those who are forming and pursuing their

scheme of life and happiness independently of *Him*. They do not consult his counsel or his will, as to what that scheme should be in its end or means; they will have a plan of pursuits and well-being to please themselves, without much inquiry or caring whether it be one that *he* will approve;—perhaps slightly wish that it *could* please *both*, but it *shall* please *me*: *this* I like, and *that* I covet, and the other would be the very summit of happiness—no matter whether he has signified a more excellent way. And then the confidence of realizing, on such a plan, his favour, his blessing, is considered as not absolutely indispensable:—"we can be happy, leaving him out of the account; the probabilities (the *presumptions* rather) of life, health, and success are in our favour, according to the ordinary course of things, and we will embark on this; for the present we can do *without him*; if our schemes fail, we can but turn to him at last." So He is forgotten!—and the deluded man goes into his scheme, and after it, with all his might, "without God." But if a brief illumination of truth might glare out upon such a man, and his schemes and prospects, what amazement and horror would seize him, to find himself thus impudently employed!—thus presuming to work out for himself a chief good of his existence, carelessly, independently, and in defiance of Him who is the sovereign good!—in effect saying—"I will make trial whether they were *not in the right* who were reproached with loving and serving the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever."

The text is a description of those who have but a slight sense of universal accountableness to God as the supreme authority; who have not a conscience constantly looking and listening to him, and testifying for him; who proceed as if this world were a province absolved from the strictness of his dominion and his laws; who *will* not apprehend that there is his will and warning affixed to every thing; who will not submissively ask, "What dost *thou* pronounce on this?" To be insensible to the divine character as Lawgiver, rightful authority and Judge,

is truly to be "without God in the world;" for thus every emotion of the soul and action of the life assumes that he is absent or does not exist. This *insensibility* of accountableness exists almost entire (a stupefaction of conscience) in very many minds. But in many others there is a disturbed yet inefficacious feeling: and might not some of these be disposed to say, "We are not 'without God in the world,' as an awful authority and judge; for we are followed, and harassed, and persecuted, sometimes quite to misery, by the thought of him in this character: we cannot go on *peacefully* in the way our inclinations lead; a portentous sound alarms us—a formidable spectre encounters us, though we still persist." The cause here is that men *wish* to be "without God in the world"—would, in preference to any other prayer, implore him to "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of his ways." They would be willing to resume the enterprise of the rebellious angels, if there were any hope. "Oh, that He, with his judgments and laws, were infinitely far away!" To be thus *with* God is in the most emphatical sense to be *without* him—without him as a friend, approver, and patron; each thought of him tells the soul who it is that it is without, and who it is that in a very fearful sense it *never* can be without.

The description belongs to that state of mind in which there is no communion with God maintained or even sought with cordial aspiration—no devout, ennobling converse held with him—no conscious reception of delightful impressions, sacred influences, suggested sentiments—no pouring out of the soul in fervent desire for *his* illuminations, *his* compassion, *his* forgiveness, *his* transforming operations—no earnest, penitential, hopeful pleading in the name of the gracious Intercessor—no solemn, affectionate dedication of the whole being—no animation and vigour obtained for the labours and warfare of a Christian life.

But how *lamentable* to be without God! Consider it in one single view only:—that of the loneliness of a human soul in this destitution. All other beings are

necessarily (shall we express it so!) extraneous to the soul; they may communicate with it, but they are still separate and without it; an intermediate vacancy keeps them for ever asunder, so that the soul must be, in a sense, in an inseparable and eternal solitude—that is, as to all creatures. But God, on the contrary, has an all-pervading power—can interfuse, as it were, *his very essence* through the being of his creatures—can cause himself to be apprehended and felt as absolutely *in* the soul—such an intercommunion as is, by the nature of things, impossible between created beings; and thus the interior *central loneliness*—the solitude of the soul—is banished by a perfectly intimate presence, which imparts the most affecting sense of society—a society, a communion, which imparts life and joy, and may continue in perpetuity. To men completely immersed in the world this might appear a very abstracted and enthusiastic notion of felicity; but to those who have in any measure attained it the idea of its loss would give the most emphatic sense of the expression, "Without God in the world."

The terms are a true description, also, of the state of mind in which there is no habitual anticipation of the great event of going at length into the presence of God—absence of the thought of being with him in another world—of being with him in judgment, and whither to be with him for ever; not considering that He awaits us *somewhere*, that the whole movement of life is absolutely towards him, that the course of life is deciding in what manner we shall appear in his presence;—not thinking what manner of fact that will be, what experience, what consciousness, what emotion;—not regarding it as the grand purpose of our present state of existence that we may attain a final dwelling in his presence.

One more, and the last application we would make of the description, is to those who, while professing to retain God in their thoughts with a religious regard, frame the religion in which they are to acknowledge him according to their own speculations and fancy. Thus many rejecters of divine revelation have

professed, nevertheless, a reverential homage to the Deity: but the God of their faith was to be such as their *sovereign reason* chose to feign, and therefore the mode of their religion entirely arbitrary. But, if revelation be true, the simple question is, Will the Almighty *acknowledge your feigned god for himself?*—and admit your religion to be equivalent to that which he has declared and defined? If he should not, you are “without God in the world.” This is unavoidably the condition, also, of those who reject any thing which he has declared essential to the relation of being in peace and acceptance with him. If, in order to this relation, there be, as we believe, an appointed substitute, sacrifice, and atonement, then the rejection of this constitution abolishes the connecting medium between man and God, and the one is without the other.

Such are the general illustrations—faintly exhibited—of the grave and formidable import of the text. We intended briefly to add a few practical exemplifications of the bad and miserable effects of such estrangement from God, as seen—in youth—in the active, busy occupation with worldly concerns—in general social converse—in times of temptation—in situations of affliction and sorrow—in old age—and in death. And now, surely, this is not the state for us to be content with for one hour; for *us* who are cast for a short period upon a scene of vanities, dangers, and ruins, with a nature full of want, helplessness, and disorder;—content with this destitution, while *He is here*, the almighty power!—While we can find him, accost him, and importune him, let us implore him not to *permit* our spirits to be detached from him, abandoned, exposed, and lost; not to let them be trying to feed their immortal fires on transitory sustenance, but to attract them, exalt them, and retain them in his communion for ever!

## ON JESUS WEeping.

THE Son of God shed tears; not those which spring from partial or private grief, but generous, social, sympathetic tears: for it is well known that this effusion of his divine tenderness was poured forth

only a few moments before he exerted his miraculous power in raising Lazarus from the dead; when, meeting the afflicted sisters and relations of his deceased friend, and beholding the extremity of their distress, he instantly caught the soft infection, and lamented that calamity as a man, which he was about to relieve as a God. The Jews, it is true, who were spectators of this solemn scene, imputed these tears to the tenderness of private friendship.—“Behold,” say they, how he loved him.”

It was the distress of his afflicted disciples and friends that opened the sacred fountains of his sorrows; with these he “groaned in spirit, and was troubled;” with these he “wept.” It was even more than this: it was a sympathy with the afflictions of mankind in general, ever liable, from the common causes of mortality, to have their breasts wounded with sorrows of this piercing sort, without alleviation, and without redress. May not we (if we can do it without presumption) suppose that some such benevolent reflections as the following, at that moment, arose in his compassionate mind? “How many, alas! how many of my future followers, like these, shall hereafter be afflicted, and in the same dreadful degree, at a time when I, their Saviour and their friend, am removed from this terrestrial scene of things! They shall call upon me, when the general laws of my Father’s providence forbid me to answer: they shall weep when I must not dry their tears. Present as I now am with these children of affliction, consoling those sorrows with my pity, which I shall shortly remove by my power, to whom shall they fly for comfort and succour in my absence? Who then shall heal the wounds of groaning friendship, of brotherly, filial, or conjugal affection? Be the tears, I now shed, their future balm: let my disciples yet unborn feel their salutary influence. Faith shall apply them still fresh to their bosoms, and they shall rest assured that he who once wept with their afflicted brethren upon earth, shall ever compassionate their own calamities in heaven.—*Mason.*”



## SERMON XIX.

### THE BLESSEDNESS OF GIVING.

PREACHED IN BEHALF OF THE BAPTIST ACADEMY AT BRISTOL,

BY THE REV. ROBERT HALL, D.D.

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*"Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."—Acts xx. 35.*

THIS is part of that very touching and affecting discourse delivered by the apostle Paul at Miletus. It appears that he was anxious to visit Ephesus; but not finding an opportunity, he sent thither for the elders; and there he took a final leave of them, under the persuasion "that they should see his face no more." The words of this discourse are indicative of the fervent piety which animated him; and none can read them without the conviction, that "in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he had his conversation in the world." He rises above all minister and worldly views, and shows that he was actuated in all things by the purest motives. He refers, in the words of the text, to a declaration of Christ. He had shown them, both by precepts and by his own example, how they ought "to support the weak;" and he exhorts them to "remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." In referring them to these words for their remembrance, it is to be supposed that he communicated them to those whom he addressed, in the course of the "three years" during which he exercised his ministry amongst them. It is remarkable that there is no other passage in which any words of our Lord are recorded, but this solitary one. Except what is written in the four evangelists, there is

no record of the kind, except this one, which mentions the blessedness of giving above that of receiving. This shows us the great uncertainty of tradition. We should have known nothing of this saying of Christ, but for the apostle Paul; which shows us how improper it is to depend on tradition for the support of important doctrines, when we cannot know one word of the Saviour's teachings but as it is recorded. Those who build partly on the word of God, and partly on tradition, build partly on a rock, and partly on the sand; partly on the truth of God, and partly on the tradition of men. That system is to be suspected, which has not for its basis the word of God.—But not to detain you by such remarks, though the words of the text naturally lead to them, I pass on to illustrate, and explain, and enforce this seeming paradox of Christ.

To say that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," may certainly be considered as a paradox; and a paradox to which men are slow to assent. Very few act on this principle: most Christians, I fear, are of another mind: and though they would not pronounce the words to be folly, yet they do not admit their propriety, they do not act under the conviction of their truth and importance. To embrace every opportunity with eagerness, to seize every opportunity that presents itself for giving, is far from being

the conduct of very many who bear the name of Christ.—I propose to assign some reasons, therefore, why “it is more blessed to give than to receive.”

As to the blessedness of *receiving*, it is quite unnecessary to say one word: the various wants of mankind lead all naturally to see this.—But “it is more blessed to give, than to receive,” for the following reasons:—

*First.* Every Christian will regulate his desire of happiness by its tendency to glorify God; and it is certain that *nothing tends so much to glorify God as the exercises of charity.* This indeed is, generally speaking, a popular virtue. Justice is demanded: demanded even by law; and he who is merely just will not excite admiration. But charity, which is not demanded: the exercise of which is not enforced by any human law:—to bestow when and where we have no prospect of return:—to relieve the helpless, and to rescue the oppressed, and to supply the needy:—and to do all this when no particular motive seems to enforce it, is generally considered as the highest branch of moral virtue. It will be found that the most distinguished instruments of glorifying God in society, have been the most benevolent and kind. The very dispensation of alms is a source of pleasure, and has much to excite us to it. But if we be the servants of Christ, we shall see that, by relieving distress, by aiding various institutions of kindness and benevolence, we are capable of doing much more good, and of bringing much more glory to him, than in any other way. All men are capable of judging of this: and we see how fit is the motive which our Saviour uses, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”—“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

*Secondly.* *Because to give implies power and abundance;* whereas to receive implies weakness and want. To have power; to have the means, not only of self-enjoyment, but such an abundance as to supply the wants of others; to “support such as are weak,” as the apostle expresses it, may be justly regarded as a

high distinction. He who seeks to increase the means of doing this, feels pleasure in his very exertions. Nor is it at all wrong for persons to seek to increase their property; to enlarge their possession of the good things of this world, that they may be able to relieve others. A moderate desire of increasing wealth is a source of industrious exertion, without which all art and science would soon decay, and all that is good and excellent in society fall back into ruin. There are few men but are actuated by a constant desire of improving their circumstances; and to indulge this, to a certain extent, is good:—and to stop when they have acquired enough for the supply of their own physical wants, would put an end to the improvement of society. This is sanctioned by the word of God: God assured the Israelites repeatedly, as a blessing on their industry, that he would make them “plenteous in good things, and in the fruit of their cattle, and the fruit of their ground;” that he would “open the heavens to give them rain unto their land in due season;”—that they should “lend and not borrow;”—that they should be “the head and not the tail;”—that they should be “above and not beneath;”—that they should, in a word, not be under obligations to those around them, but beneficial. We are informed that “the hand of the diligent maketh rich;”—that “the man who is diligent in his business, shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.” And at the same time Solomon declares, that idleness leads to want, and beggary, and rags. He, therefore, who has the ability to give, has received a peculiar favour at the hands of God: he has a talent put into his hands of the most valuable kind: he rises superior in rank and station to him who is in a state of indigence and want. And this is a desirable state: he who has any nobleness of mind would surely rather resemble the sturdy oak, which stands erect amidst all the storms, than the parasitical plant, which creeps and clings to all around. The gradual increase of property, as the fruit of industry, is found to be most conducive to virtue and social order. If such a man keeps

in view, at the same time, the glory of God; if he does all that he can to be beneficial to those around him; he is right to indulge that moderate desire of success which enables him to experience the blessedness of giving.—As another reason, I mention,

*Thirdly. The pleasure that results from the act of giving.*—The pleasure of receiving is circumscribed. It consists of receiving a certain portion of money, or what else. It is a low and selfish kind of pleasure: it springs merely from the enjoyment of a certain portion of the fruits of the earth: it is physical and transitory. —But the pleasure of giving, from a proper principle, is of a very high order: it is too pure, too subtle, too refined, to be enjoyed by vulgar minds. It is of two kinds:—it consists, *first*, in the testimony of a good conscience. It shows that we are rightly employing the gifts which God has imparted to us. "The good man," it is said, "is satisfied from himself:" and never are we able to rise above ourselves so much, as when we are conscious that we have contributed to the happiness of those around us.—But besides this, there is a peculiar and specific pleasure in giving. It is the idea of mingling in the sorrows, and *partaking in the joys of others*. He who gives, delights in the good he does: in the smile of contentment which brightens the countenance; in the glow of gratitude and love which he is sure is felt in the heart; he feels himself connected with those around him. We are so formed, that we feel much pleasure and delight in beholding the flowers with which we ourselves have decked this moral garden. The consciousness that we have done good, lights up "the human face divine," and causes a glow of ineffable joy in our souls. "It is more blessed," by far, "to give than to receive." It is like the blessedness of the Deity, who can only give, and who receives nothing. Do not imagine, therefore, that when you are called upon to give to a poor fellow creature, you do yourselves a meanness;—no:—you rise in the scale of happiness and of dignity above those who withhold. And this is a blessing which may be en-

joyed at the greatest distance, and at the most remote period. The future recollection of benevolence will give you pleasure, and pleasure of such a kind as shall render the apostle's doctrine easy to be understood; "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."—"It is more blessed to give than to receive,"

*Fourthly.* Because, while we know perfectly well what is the full amount of the gift we bestow, in relieving pressing want, and in satisfying painful desire, there is much higher blessedness, of the extent of which it is not so easy to conceive. *The man who gives is improving his own character*—he is advancing in excellence and in moral virtue. While he is doing good to others, he is increasing his own excellence: he is rising farther and farther above the contagion of that disease which is spreading around, in those that regard not the glory of God. He is proving himself superior to those who live only for themselves, and regard not others. His soul rises above what is low, and mean, and sordid; and mingles with the most pure, most sanctified, most holy part of the creation of God. There is no school in which to learn the practice of virtue with such facility, as in the exercises of benevolence. Those who are the most truly benevolent, are making the swiftest advances in that "holiness, without which no man can see the Lord;" and he who is labouring from a proper motive to do good to those around him; who is sacrificing his time, his talents, his property, to promote the benefit of his fellow-creatures, is rising nearer to an imitation of God than any other. Look at those who have been the most truly benevolent, and you will see this. The Christian religion is of a practical tendency: it is an imitation of Him who, throughout his whole life, "went about doing good."—"The man who gives, then, is "more blessed" than he who receives; he is preparing himself for that glory which is in heaven; he is laying up for himself a portion in another world, in that state where every vessel shall be filled with the glories of immortality for ever and ever.

*Fifthly.* "It is more blessed to give

than to receive," because in giving *we are resembling God, and Jesus Christ, the high pattern for our imitation.* God and his eternal Son delight in giving; and we are called to resemble them. We admit, indeed, that there is an infinite disparity. We have nothing to give but what we have received: we can create nothing: in giving, we merely change property, or remove it from one place to another. But God can give only.—Our limits, too, are greatly circumscribed. How small a portion of any particular kingdom, or of the world, can any philanthropist, any liberal-minded man visit by his bounty:—but God can do good in every place, and to an unlimited extent. *We* know not whether what we do may be productive of good or of harm: we can give only what affects the body; the mind may be still left in a state of pain and sorrow. But God can give all that is needful: he can relieve the soul as well as the body. There are blessings of grace which he has to bestow: blessings which all need, blessings which none should refuse, blessings which are sure to do good.—Yet, with all these deductions, it is not too much to say, that the man who delights to give, is a living example of the character of God. When we hear Job say, "I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. I brake the jaws of the wicked; and plucked the spoil out of his teeth. I was a father to the poor; I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy:"—we seem to be reading an account of the actions of some being of a superior order. Yet he was a man of like passions with ourselves. When we see a man who is continually giving, we see one who is acting like God; we see a faithful steward of the manifold bounties conferred upon him. Thus we aim to be perfect as he is perfect, who "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." You will recollect, that while our Saviour calls upon us to imitate God, it is in this part of his character. "Be ye therefore

perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."—And what was the example of Jesus Christ when on earth? He was always giving: giving food to the hungry—eyes to the blind—health to the sick—pardon to the guilty. He came to bless every man, "by turning every man from his iniquity." And he is continually opening the fountain of blessedness which springs up in his soul, and has ever been blessing mankind. The more we do this, the more nearly we resemble Christ, the more we "adorn the gospel of God our Saviour." By this will all men know that we are disciples of Christ. The world never knew any thing of benevolence till Jesus Christ came. Ambition, and envy, and malice, and deceit, and wrong, and injury, were well known; but not true charity, till Christ came "to seek and to save that which was lost." Every Christian will delight in going forward in the imitation of this great pattern.

*Sixthly.* The blessedness of giving is superior to that of receiving; because, *under the dispensation of grace, to give aright will be connected with an eternal reward.* Let no one be surprised at this. We are told plainly that there shall be an abundant reward:—"He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." It is said also, "Give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give unto your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again."—We are told that "he shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy;" and that "mercy rejoiceth against judgment;" and that "blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Scripture is full of the high rewards to be bestowed on benevolence, assuring us that they who have done

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good shall enter into life everlasting. And all this is quite consistent with the doctrine of *justification by faith*: for it is certain that no gifts, however splendid, can be pleasing to God, if they be presented by a man who is not justified. They are the gifts of a rebel, of a rebel who is under sentence of death:—if a man were condemned to die as a rebel, it is certain that no acts of obedience, no gifts of kindness to those around him, no promises of future allegiance, would avail;—they could not change his character from that of a rebel to that of a faithful servant; his private virtues, however numerous, could not be taken into the account. All men are rebels against God; and “by the deeds of the law can no flesh living be justified.” No acts which we may perform can atone for sin, or render us acceptable to God. But, if the Most High has graciously promised to bestow pardon—if he has assured us that all who will lay down the arms of their rebellion shall be pardoned and restored to his favour, then those who are thus pardoned and reconciled may approach to him without fear; they may obtain from him the assurances of his favour, and may confidently hope for the testimonials of his approbation. Then the majesty of heaven may receive their services; services from those who are reconciled to him, but not from those who are still in a state of rebellion. We must first receive the forgiveness of sins;—we must come to him by the blood of the cross;—we must approach him through Jesus Christ alone, and alone by faith obtain pardon and renewal. We must begin here: we must be justified by faith; and then, being justified by faith, you may hope for acceptance.—Through Jesus Christ and his precious blood, God will accept the free-will offerings of such. The doctrines of justification by faith, and the free grace of God, are never for a moment lost sight of by enforcing the performance of acts of charity;—and let me remind you, that God loves the disposition to do good—the wish to act for the benefit of others. He loved it in his own Son; and He who offered himself up for us and our salvation, presented

“an offering and a sacrifice to God of a *sweet smelling savour*.” God accepts this imitation of Christ on the part of his people, not from any virtue there is in them, but from the virtue there is in Christ, to whom they are united, and through whom they ever will be blessed.—And the rewards which God will bestow upon such are of a kind which could not possibly be connected with merit in them. They include peace and consolation of soul in the present life, and the future vision of God, and the full enjoyment of holiness and perfect bliss. He will say to all those who have aimed to be useful upon earth, “Well done, good and faithful servant!—Enter ye into the joy of your Lord.” O, the unspeakable blessedness of giving in that great day, when He will bestow upon all according to their works!—When the righteous shall find that all their virtues have vegetated and brought forth abundant fruit, what joy and blessedness shall take possession of their souls! But they have performed these actions with regard to the glory of God, and with a desire to please him. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

I would apply this doctrine of the blessedness of giving above that of receiving, very briefly, by simply exhorting those who hear me *to act on this principle*. Be assured that He who said this will make it plainly out in the experience of all. Determine to give rather than to receive. Learn to consider yourselves as “not your own, but bought with a price;” and aim to “glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits, which are God’s.”

The great means of having it in our power to act on this principle is *to practice economy*. Those who give their minds to it will find their means multiply far beyond what they could themselves expect.—Frugality opens a variety of sources, furnishes a number of means of well doing. There is scarcely an individual who has it not in his power to do good: all may so act as to have “to give to him that needeth.” None are ex-

cluded : the duty, the blessedness, is not confined to either rich or poor. The apostle says, "Let him that stole, steal no more ; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good ;" not merely that he may supply his own necessities, but "that he may have to give to him that needeth." The apostle taught also that the poor should act so frugally, as not only industriously to supply their own wants, but to be able to give to others. If, indeed, we consult vanity—if we are guided by fashion—if we give way to covetousness—if we indulge in vain show—if we follow the course of this world, we shall never have to give to others. A mean and avaricious disposition will ever keep pace with the love of splendour and of show ;—but if we endeavour not to seek the things of the world ; if we remember not to "seek great things for ourselves ;" if we consider that "all that is in the world is not of the Father, but of the world ;" if, as Christians, we aim to rise above it,—we shall always find ample means of doing good ; and he who anxiously wishes it, will always find himself able to advance the interests of his neighbour. But there must be frugality, or it will not be possible that our aims to do good will be carried to any extent.

And while we aim to do good, generally, to supply the *bodily wants* of our fellow-creatures, let us remember that *there are other objects still nobler*. He that provides instruction for those around him does more than he who supplies food ; and he that supplies them with spiritual knowledge does still more ; and he who provides and prepares agents to impart this spiritual knowledge, does the highest act of benevolence of which we can conceive. And this is the very object we have in view in this service : it is to support an institution, *by which young men are fitted for the work of the ministry*. This must be considered as benevolence of the highest order. Surely we never so imitate Christ as when we are aiming to send out the great gift which he has ever given to men. "When he ascended up on high, he gave gifts unto men. He gave some, apostles ; and some, prophets ;

and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." No man can possibly ascertain the effects of this gift : Christ is by this means making millions to rejoice in his truth—millions of wanderers have been reclaimed—millions have been converted from the error of their ways ; and long as they exist will they bless his name. And what is to be the means of perpetuating this good ? Most of those who are called by God, are called by a holy ministry. The gospel is still "the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth." And, in the present very advanced state of society, none can be fully qualified for this work without much preparation. Time was when God raised up men who shone most brightly, without the aids of human learning : there have been some who have risen high, and been eminently useful. In our own denomination we have known a Bunyan and a Fuller, who rose to a gigantic height. But these were by no means common cases ; they were exceptions—they are not to be regarded as precedents : we are not to expect such men to be raised up every day.—While education is going on generally throughout society, we must keep pace. There is scarcely a congregation now to be found in the remotest part of the kingdom, in which there are not some men who are able to comprehend, and who do not consider and examine what is said.

I need not say one word to induce you to acknowledge the importance of this : you know well the necessity of academical institutions. That for which I have the honour to plead is one of the most ancient ; and, without wishing to depreciate any similar institution, I would say, that it is at least equal to any in existence. The students have all the assistance of a library which is not excelled by any in the kingdom, and are aided in their pursuits by learned and pious men. In consequence of building, a debt has been

contracted, which has placed the trustees in great difficulty, and prevented them from receiving as many young men as might otherwise be accommodated. They make a strong appeal to you, while thus struggling with great difficulties, and while aiming to raise up a number of men who shall speak to the people the words of eternal life. You have lately had many demands made upon you, and much has been said to excite you to benevolence. But "be not weary in well-doing:" we expect no large proportion of your property;—a scanty portion of your abundance, without much exercise of self-denial, is all that is needed to attend this application.—You will do nobly on this occasion, if you only part with a small portion of your superfluity; and you will, no doubt, be willing to do this, anxious to experience the blessedness of those who give: you will delight to lay up for yourselves those rewards which he has graciously promised to bestow. Remember God has put the "treasure" of his gospel into "earthen vessels," "that the excellency of the power may be of him."—"How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?" And how can they be duly prepared, unless you furnish the means? If Christians withhold the means, the church of God must cease; places of worship must be shut up; immortal souls must be neglected. But you will not allow this: you will come "to the help of the Lord against the mighty;"—you will not look at the weakness of the instruments, but remember that 'tis the cause of God. They may be feeble; but they are such men as Christ employs in going forth "conquering and to conquer." They form that army which He is leading forth, who hath "on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."—They are "the called, and chosen, and faithful," whom he will employ to accomplish his designs; and he who despises these ministers as mean and contemptible, would despise and condemn their Master, if he were upon

earth. Let us listen to him who says:—"It is more blessed to give than to receive;" and he who has said it will make it good, in an abundant recompense to all who thus have studied "to adorn the gospel of God our Saviour."

#### RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE.

THE Bishop of Chester, in his charge to the clergy of his diocese, on "individual instruction," observes that "without this, little permanent effect will be produced by any ministry; and, with it, a minister who is comparatively feeble in the pulpit, will be more useful than the most eloquent, who confines himself to the pulpit alone." After dwelling at some length upon the value, and, indeed, the absolute necessity, of thus teaching "from house to house," the bishop considers the important inquiry, "Who is sufficient, 'physically' sufficient for these things?" and candidly acknowledges, what every unprejudiced mind must at once confess, that, "in our larger parishes, it is not possible for the strength or activity of the clergy alone to provide for such individual instruction." He then proceeds to show that this difficulty can only be sufficiently combated *by the aid of the laity*; "Let the minister of a populous district, using careful discrimination of character, select such as 'are worthy' and of 'good report,' and assign them their several employments, under his directions; they may lessen their own labour, by visiting and examining the schools; by reading and praying with the infirm and aged; by consoling the fatherless and widows in their afflictions; and pursuing the many nameless ways by which it is in the power of one Christian to benefit and relieve another:" in the appendix, the Bishop gives an outline of the plan of two or three district societies, where this system of lay instruction has been tried, in densely populous parishes, with very considerable effect.

## SERMON XX.

### THE GLORIFICATION OF THE WORD OF GOD.

BY THE REV JOSEPH FLETCHER, D.D.

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*"Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you."*—2 Thess. iii. 1.

THE apostle Paul, in this solemn and impressive injunction, asserts the dignity of the gospel—he describes it to be the word of the Lord; and he who recorded the injunction well knew its claims to this high and sacred designation. He had first heard the word of the Lord in circumstances of strange and mysterious interest. On the way to Damascus its power first reached his heart, and it proved to be indeed the power of God to his salvation. He was then engaged in an enterprise of fearful resentment against the disciples of the despised Nazarene. His interests at that time were all on the side of his prejudices and his passions—a mistaken conviction of duty giving force to the one and authority to the other.

All the ardour of youthful feeling, all the energy of powerful talents, all the influence of the high and distinguished connections that surrounded him, and all the effect which he was able to produce on the minds of others, were devoted at that period to one object, and that object was the utter extermination of the Christian cause. He was a man characterized by that ardour of temperament, by that hardihood of nerve, by that passion of character, that he could do nothing by halves. No one could have looked at him without at once receiving the impression, that in whatever cause he engaged, to whatever object he was devoted, it would concentrate and absorb the strength of all his powers, and the force of all his passions, and that, according to the object which he regarded, and the

direction of those powers and of those passions, he was fitted to be either an angel of mercy or a destroying demon to the rest of his race.

He was approaching the spot destined to be the scene of unrelenting hostility against the disciples of the cross; but in the midst of all his anticipations a marvellous effect is produced, on which he had never calculated, which was, therefore, strictly a miracle of mercy—a deviation from the ordinary and established course of the Divine procedure in the administration of his mercy. A voice from heaven reached his ear—a more powerful voice reached his heart. His conversion to the faith of Jesus was *instantaneous*. The power of prejudice instantly withered. He felt, as by the stroke of lightning, the force of evidence and the power of truth. It was not merely an effect produced on his understanding in the way of rational conviction; it was an effect produced on his heart by the power of sanctifying mercy. It was then he received the word of the Lord—it was then that all the sentiments of astonishment, and conviction, and penitence, and deep humiliation, and instant resolution, and undaunted decision, were combined and involved in one prayer, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?"—and his whole life, from that memorable moment, was a practical commentary on that first prayer. He could say, emphatically, "*One thing I do.*"

And while the fact of his conversion proved the truth of the gospel, the character founded on that change, and re-



sulting from it, was the best possible illustration of the tendency and the influence of the gospel. His conversion exhibited a decisive and invincible proof of its divinity; his character exhibited an equally decisive and invincible proof of its holy, its spiritual, and its heavenly tendency.

Read, then, my brethren, the history of this astonishing man—observe the varying circumstances in which he was placed, the extended scene of his labours, the privations to which he submitted, the unparalleled energy pervading all his actions, and exhibited amid all his sufferings—and you will find one principle lying at the foundation of all this structure of moral excellency—one mighty spring giving its powerful and uniform impulse to all the actions of his life. Whether you find him at liberty or in bonds—amid the court of Areopagus, or amongst the barbarians at Melita—whether you find him proclaiming the truth to the barbarian and the savage, or the Athenian and the Roman, you find one great object before him, giving animation to his motives, consistency to his character, concentration to his efforts, and, under the mighty power which wrought in him, success to all his enterprises. That one object was, that the word of the Lord might have free course and be glorified.

That object, in one respect, was not *personal*. True, indeed, personal interests were deeply involved in the views and the anticipations by which he was influenced. He could not possibly forget, in this respect, his personal interest. He had received a commission to proclaim the word of the Lord and the faith of the Saviour. Strange events connected with his conversion, and always associated with every recollection of it, would deeply fix upon his memory, and his conscience, and his heart, the responsibility involved in his commission; and he could say, therefore, "Wo be to me if I preach not the gospel." True, he felt a personal interest in the gospel, because all his own hopes, all his own consolations, were derived from it. But in no sense which would convey the idea of any thing that was selfish, or interested, or secular, or

connected with the aggrandizement and the objects of the present passing state, could it be said that he was influenced by personal considerations. All the ordinary motives which we connect with the usual acceptation of the phrase, as derived from the connection and the objects, the possessions and the interests, of the present state, had no power over the heart of this holy man. It was to him, therefore, a matter of perfect indifference whether he was a slave or a free man—whether he was sick or in health—whether he was rich or poor. He possessed an independence of the highest order, of the sublimest philosophy, in relation to all the accidents and all the external circumstances of his present history, and looking forward to eternity, he felt a realizing sense of the value of the soul, and was conscious of the claim of that imperishable truth which God had committed to him as a sacred deposit; and to propagate that truth, and to promote its high and holy objects, was the very end for which he lived, and moved, and had his being.

There was nothing *political* in the object he regarded, and yet, in a certain point of view, it was morally impossible that the object could succeed—morally impossible that the principle on which the apostle laboured, and by which he was governed, with a view to the promotion of the object, should have free course, and operate on the minds, and passions, and characters of others, without ultimately producing even political results. He knew that superstition and idolatry, in all their varied forms and monstrous combinations, were as ill adapted to promote the present interests of the human race as they were in direct opposition to their spiritual welfare and their eternal felicity; and no doubt, therefore, the comprehensive, the prophetic mind of the apostle looked forward to the period when, by the mighty power of the gospel, the altars of idolatry should be overturned, the whole fabric of society should be newly formed, and the systems of idolatry should be annihilated, and every principle opposed to the true interests and general felicity of the human race should

trample into dust before the withering power of heavenly truth—before the might and majesty of the word of the Lord.

And, my brethren, in the same view of the subject we may contemplate even in a certain sense—not in the minor and petty and contracted acceptance of the term, but in the more large and liberal view of it—we may contemplate that the success of gospel efforts shall have the most powerful influence on the destinies of thrones, on the condition of empires, on the state of nations; for we look forward to a period when the whole world shall become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ; we look forward to this as the legitimate result of the very object to which the apostle refers us—the success of the gospel, the glorifying of the word of God.

My brethren, I have chosen the subject of this apostolic injunction as the topic of our present reflections, because I conceive it to be peculiarly appropriate to the end for which we are this day gathered together in the sanctuary. Most devoutly do I rejoice, with the church and congregation that will henceforth assemble within these walls, on this auspicious day, and on the results to which their prayers, and their liberality, and their long-continued arrangements have led them, and by means of which we are this day permitted, with other churches and other congregations, to share with them in their felicity, to be helpers with them in their joy, and to unite with them in solemn and fervent supplications to the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort. What, my beloved friends, is the end for which you have erected this spacious edifice? Why have you sought this ample territory for the proclamation of the truth, for the administration of the word and ordinances of the most high God? What have been the impelling motives by which, as a church of the Redeemer, you have been influenced in all the arrangements and all the liberality that have terminated in this day? I trust, my brethren, that with each individual member of the church and congregation there is a principle accordant in spirit, and sympathy, and feeling, with the

prayer before us. What, *what*, my dear friends, what is the request in which you would unite with us, whom you have invited, in the services of this day, to share with you in holy fellowship, in hallowed anticipation?—what is the prayer which would embody to your mind the most interesting, the most important ends to which all your efforts have been directed? Could one voice utter the feelings, and the anxieties, and the requests, of this church and congregation, to all the churches and all the pastors of this vicinity, of this metropolis, and even of our whole country, in the length and breadth of it, what would be the language of that request? “Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified.” And we assemble, my beloved friends, to assure you that our hearts correspond with yours in the request which you have thus presented; and we would unite our supplications and combine our sympathies with yours, and re-echo, from the inmost recesses of our minds, the apostolic injunction, “Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified amongst us, and glorified in every part of our country, and glorified throughout the world, even as it is with you.”

This apostolic injunction brings before us,

#### I. THE GREAT OBJECT OF CHRISTIAN DEVOTION.

The object is strikingly represented in the phraseology of the text, and it consists,

1st. *In the free and unimpeded circulation of the gospel.* “Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course.”

There are impediments to the progress of the gospel—mighty impediments to its progress.—They may all of them, indeed, be resolved into one—*hinderances*, and hinderances are overcome in every instance in which the word is the power of God to salvation. But the impediments are variously manifested. There are impediments to the gospel in the spirit of persecution—in the prevalence of idolatry and superstition—in the power of Antichrist—in the effects of infidelity—

in the inconsistency and the corruptions by which the Christian church is itself degraded; but all of them, however varied, may be resolved into one, the opposition of the heart to the power, and virtue, and influence of the gospel. It was, therefore, with peculiar propriety, my friends, that the apostle taught the believers of Thessalonica to pray that the word of the Lord might have free course.

He alludes, in this injunction, to the ancient *stadium*, or race-course, on which persons were employed in running, for the purpose of gaining the honours of the Olympic prizes, or obtaining some perishing crown, some fading distinction, which the applause and which the honours of the world might confer. It was requisite, obviously requisite, before there could be the successful progress of such as were engaged in running this race, that every impediment should be removed—that crooked things should be made straight—that rough places should be made plain—that the valley should be exalted, and the hills should be made low—and thus a way should be prepared for their unimpeded movement. The apostle, therefore, applies this imagery to the gospel. The Son of God is riding forth in the chariot of his gospel, and those employed in preaching it may well be considered, in a certain sense, as running a race, employed in a most important and honourable competition. But there must be the removal of all the hinderances which exist in the state of feeling, in the prejudices, in the opinions, in the customs of mankind, by means of which opposition in various forms is presented to the power and the influence of the gospel. When the apostle, therefore, taught the Thessalonians to pray that the word of the Lord might have free course, he was, in fact, teaching them to pray for the progress of the cause of liberty; he was, in fact, teaching them to pray for the march of truth and knowledge; because he knew that liberty, and truth, and knowledge, in relation to all the objects that could occupy the thoughts and attention of men, would be ultimately subservient to the progress and the triumphs of the gospel. When he taught

them to pray that the word of the Lord might have free course, he taught them to pray that whatever hinderances existed in the inward opinions, in the feelings, in the prejudices, in the pride, in the natural scepticism and unbelief of the heart, to its admission and to its triumphs, might be removed. And he could not possibly look back on the state of his own heart, on the impediments to the entrance of the word which existed in that heart, and to the wondrous energy by which the word had free course, overcame, subdued, and conquered it, without feeling that every recollection encouraged him to confidence and perseverance in his hallowed work.

But, my brethren, it was not enough for the apostle to have contemplated the free and the unimpeded circulation of the gospel, the removal of all external impediments as a great and important end; but he looked upon these as subservient to some other end. "Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified."

*What, then, is it for the word of the Lord to be glorified?*—will thus demand, in the next place, our consideration, in illustrating the object of Christian devotion.

It would not, my friends, in your estimate be enough, if in every part of our country, and in every government and kingdom under heaven, the most unrestricted freedom were enjoyed. It would not be enough for you that all the difficulties and all the impediments in the way of the evangelization of the world, arising from persecution, from idolatry, from anti-christian superstition, from the systems of infidelity and of every other outward cause, were removed. It would not be enough for you that in every part of our land, in every part of our world, there were edifices, spacious and elegant like your own, in which assembling thousands might unite for the great purposes of worship and fellowship. It would not be enough for you that, on principles connected with the simplicity and spirituality of the gospel, kings were every where nursing fathers, and queens nursing mothers, to the church, and that

the power and splendour of rank, authority, and government, were every where subservient to the progress of the truth. Even all this moral machinery, erected upon the very best principles throughout every part of the world, would not realize your objects—would not realize that for which you are taught to pray in this apostolic injunction. All this would not meet the glorifying of the word of God; for, my friends, the glorifying of that word is inseparably connected with its being made the power of God to salvation—is inseparably connected with that influence by means of which the understandings of men are enlightened, the hearts of men are renewed, and sinners are turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the power of God, receiving forgiveness of their sins, and an inheritance among them who are sanctified.

When then, my friends, may it be said that the word of the Lord is glorified? In pointing out the instances which may be viewed as accomplishing this object, I am sure that I am stating what you will regard—my brethren, the members of this church and congregation, you who know any thing of the power and influence of the gospel—as that which alone can realize and accomplish the objects for which you are now assembled. The word of the Lord is glorified when it is the medium of spiritual renovation, when its supreme authority is felt and recognised by all who profess to receive it—when its discoveries are cordially received—when its injunctions are practically regarded—when its holy influence is exemplified in the tempers and in the conduct of those who profess to receive it. The word of the Lord is glorified when that word becomes the law of all your thoughts, the rule of all your actions, the authority to which you submit with implicit deference, the principle moulding all the elements of your nature into subjection to itself. The word of the Lord is glorified when, by means of that word, sinners are guided to the refuge of mercy, pricked to the heart, are led to exclaim, “What shall we do to be saved?”—and are constrained to cast down, at the foot

of the cross, the weapons of their hostility, and to consecrate themselves to the service and honour of the divine Redeemer.

Oh, my beloved friends! it is the accomplishment of these objects which alone can furnish the answer to the prayers, and the devotional anxiety, and the earnest solicitudes, of this day. I know too well the heart of my beloved and esteemed brother, the pastor of the church assembling within these walls, not to know that whatever falls short of the realization of this object will not satisfy him. If within these walls sinners are led to feel the energy of heavenly truth piercing their consciences, alarming their spirits, leading them to inquire, What shall we do to be saved?—if those who are driven in from accident, or curiosity, or even base and unhallowed motives, should, though they came to scoff, return to pray—if the arrow of conviction should enter the conscience and subdue the heart—if the rebel should be brought to submit to the authority of the Redeemer—if thus, from Sabbath to Sabbath there should be transmitted from this sanctuary, to the realms of purity and bliss, the glad intelligence that another and another prodigal is brought to the house of his Father, another and another sinner led to repentance, and thus there should be fresh joy in heaven, and the harps of angels should be again attuned to louder notes of joy, and the Redeemer, looking from his elevation, should be satisfied while witnessing the triumphs of his gospel, and reaping the rewards of his humiliation;—these will be the ends which alone can accomplish the object of Christian devotion, that alone can realize and consummate the true end for which you are this day gathered together. It is, my brethren, that the word of the Lord may be glorified. Yes, it is glorified not only when sinners, by the energy of God's Spirit making it effectual, are turned from darkness to light, but it is glorified when those who receive it exemplify its spirit and adorn its doctrines, walking worthy of their high vocation, proving that the gospel is the power of God to their salvation.

Mark, therefore, my beloved brethren, mark the devout solicitude with which the apostle pressed this very object on the attention of the believers in Thessalonica. The gospel had been glorified among them; it had had free course, even though persecution scowled; it had had free course, by turning them from idols to serve the living and true God; it had had free course, for their characters proved their election, and exhibited the evidence that God had written their names in the book of life; and thus the gospel, triumphing in their hearts, and displaying its practical effects in their lives, was indeed the power of God to their salvation. But he was not satisfied with what had been effected; he looked forward to still greater and more important results, and to these very Thessalonians we find him saying, in the language of deep and earnest solicitude, "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering, without ceasing, your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ." He calls upon them to pray that God might count them worthy of their calling, and fulfil in them all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power. When God's word is glorified—when the work of God is carried on with power—when in the unity of the Spirit, in the liberality of feeling, in the exercise of holy charity, in the consistent deportment of those who name the name of Christ, God is glorified—it is then, my friends, that we see beautifully accomplished the meaning of the prophetic testimony, "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." Such, my brethren, are the objects of Christian devotion which the apostle has brought before us in this solemn injunction.

But, while the text reminds us of the great objects of Christian zeal and devotion, I remark,

II. IT ENJOINS THE DUTY OF PERSEVERANT PRAYER IN ORDER TO ITS ACCOMPLISHMENT.

*"Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified."*

The connection between prayer and the success of the gospel is one which involves many important principles. We may often find it difficult to prove the connection, but the word of God distinctly asserts it—the history of the Christian church demonstrates it—the feelings of all true believers give the inward demonstration of the reality of it. No one ever doubts the efficacy of prayer till he has forgotten to pray. The moment a man is under the influence of practical scepticism in relation to prayer, that moment the power and spirit of prayer have lost their predominancy and their influence over his mind. Prayer is the first indication of spiritual life—prayer is a decisive evidence of the advancement of that life—prayer is the barometer to determine the elevation and depression of the spiritual principle. In proportion as we feel the power and spirit of prayer, in that proportion we shall be ready to perform every good word and work. And why, my brethren? Because,

1st. *Prayer honours the agency of God.*

Prayer moves the hand that moves all things. If we have the ear of God, we are sure of the hand of God. If the spirit of supplication be poured out upon us, the very consciousness of that feeling and energy is itself the pledge of success. God himself is the Author of that good and perfect gift. Whatever leads to God comes from God, and whatever comes from God leads to him. He has not enjoined upon us the duty of prayer, because he is unwilling to accomplish the ends for which we pray. He has not enjoined it upon us, because there is uncertainty in his plans and purposes. He has not enjoined it upon us because there is anything like dependence on his part as to our entreaties—as if he would grant that to our fervour which he would not grant in any other circumstances—as if he were moved, as we are moved, by fervent supplications. God is not a being of parts or of passions; he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. But, though "his thought moves on his undisturbed affairs:"

—though he is of one mind and none can turn him—though his counsel will stand, and he will do all his pleasure—it is as much his pleasure to have connected prayer with the accomplishment of his own design as any other species of moral agency. He who has made faith, and hope, and charity, and practical godliness, in all its various manifestations, essential to present happiness, and essential to your everlasting welfare, has, for the very same reason, made prayer no less essential to the accomplishment of those ends; and could we resolve the whole matter of this connection into nothing but his own will and his own determination, it would be enough. He who is the Sovereign of the universe, who is the source of all good—he whose blessing is life evermore, and can command it if he please—has a right to command the terms on which the blessing shall be enjoyed; and he has connected it with prayer, because prayer honours his agency—it is the solemn recognition of it—it brings the mind at once into that posture, that attitude, before the majesty and mercy of the Most High, that leads us to feel that in his sight “we are nothing, and less than nothing, and vanity.” Unless his power work *with us*, and *by us*, all our resolutions, and all our doings, will be totally ineffectual. And, therefore,

2dly. Prayer is necessary, because *it is expressly enjoined—enjoined by the most explicit revelation on the subject.*

God has said, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” “For all these things will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.” Nay, we find Jehovah putting himself into the very attitude of entreating, and calling upon us to give him no rest till he shall arise, and have mercy on Zion. And he calls his church his remembrancer. They are to appear before him for the very purpose of putting him in remembrance—not that he forgets, or is unwilling to bestow—not that his purposes can ever change, but because he has thus connected the spirit and duty of prayer with the accomplishment of his own designs.

3d. We see the connection proved, because, *in all the institutions of the church in every age, and in the history of individual believers, the spirit of prayer is invariably connected with success.*

No one ever prayed for himself that did not succeed. Let this encourage the anxious inquirer—let this tranquillize the troubled spirit in this assembly, who may sometimes be led to fear that God hath not heard, and will not answer, his supplications. Oh, persevere in prayer, whatever your present doubts, whatever your misgivings, whatever your fearful apprehensions, whatever your painful and overwhelming anxieties! Oh, let not the enemy of your souls—let not the temptations of Satan—let not the enjoyments of the world—let not the deceitfulness of your own hearts, cause you to relax in prayer! If you have not at once all the comfort and all the confidence that you would wish to enjoy, continue to pray. “Be instant in prayer—pray without ceasing;” and you will find, sooner or later, that praying breath will never be spent in vain. Can you, brethren, refer to any Christian church, on which the spirit of prayer descended, that was not a successful church? Can you mention any individual believer, the head of a family, who was really a man of prayer, who did not succeed in the most important objects that lay nearest his heart? Can you tell me of any who have ever, really and sincerely, approached the throne of mercy, and sought a blessing from the eternal throne, according to the will of God, and sought it in faith, and yet have not received it? My friends, there is much of practical infidelity amidst all our professions. We talk more of prayer than we really practise in reference to it. We may defend the duty on the ground of unanswerable argument; we may refer to the fact which the history of the church in all ages has illustrated, that God is the hearer of prayer; but what we need, for ourselves and for others, is the spirit of prayer. The apostle felt the importance of it, and therefore did he enjoin upon the believers of Thessalonica that they would pray for him, and pray for all connected with him

in the great work of preaching the gospel, that the word of the Lord might be glorified. Oh, let the history of the church, in past ages, encourage you, my friends, to the spirit of prayer! This will be to your own pastor, and to all connected with him in the ministry of the word, the most delightful evidence of the reality of your faith, and the sincerity of your devotion. This will be evidence which God himself will acknowledge and approve. You never knew eminent usefulness secured without an eminent portion of the spirit of prayer. What is it that has embalmed, in the history of the Christian church, the illustrious names of Brainerd and Martyn, and others of modern times, who stood before us arrayed in the beauties of holiness, and who are lights thrown on our path to guide us onward, and to animate us in the Christian pilgrimage? What was it that distinguished those men? The spirit of earnest, fervent, persevering prayer. When we see our places of worship crowded at the period when we meet for prayer—when we see the arrangements of social life, as far as possible, made to adjust themselves to the period agreed upon in the church for united prayer—when we see religion made the object, the commanding object, to which every thing else is subservient, both in the arrangements of the family and the world, then will the church arise from her lowly state of degradation—then will she put on her beautiful garments, for God himself will have arrayed her with salvation—then will be the precursor that he himself is about to arise, and pour out his Spirit in rich effusion on the church and on the world; and then will come salvation; and the kingdoms of the world will become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever. The duty of prayer is enjoined,

4thly. *Because those engaged in promoting this object, who have it directly in view, whose office it is peculiarly to regard it, have especial claims on you.* “Brethren, pray for us.”

It is the prayer of the Christian minister to the church over whom God hath

placed him—it is the prayer of the apostle to the church over which, by divine authority, he was commissioned to preside—it is the prayer we present to you this day, as the united pastors of churches mingling our supplications with those of our beloved brother at the throne of the heavenly mercy, and we say to you, “*Brethren, pray for us.*” The minister is encouraged in his work who knows that his people are thus engaged. Like Moses on the mount, he is upheld by the hands of prayer. The man goes through the labours and the toils of his pastoral duties, and the various engagements of his office, who is surrounded by devout men who bear him up in their affectionate remembrance in private retirement—in the family circle. When you meet for prayer, if you knew how much of the true comfort, of the holy courage, of the sacred joy of the Christian minister is connected with the spirit of prayer for him and for the success of his labours, you would never be weary in well doing in this respect—you would never forget him. You would not remember him—nor would he be anxious that you should remember him—on the ground of any merely personal and selfish considerations; but he is anxious you should remember him, because in proportion to the degree of your zeal, and sincerity, and constancy in this work, you will listen to him with affection—his doctrine will distil as the dew, and drop as the rain on the tender grass, and your hearts will be open to receive the ingrafted word. The man who comes to the sanctuary in the spirit of capacious, capricious feeling, desiring to make a man an offender for a word, is one who has not presented for his minister earnest supplication. The man who is indifferent and unmoved, who sits before the pulpit altogether unconscious of the importance and authority of the truth presented to his notice, and hears as though he heard not—that man has not the spirit of earnest and fervent supplication. If he had, there would be vitality—there would be deep and affectionate interest—there would be earnest concern to profit—faith would be mixed with what he hears—there would be a right construe-

tion put on every explanation given, and while there would be a faithful regard to the authority of God's word, as the only rule of doctrine and precept, still there would be that humility, that teachableness, which is always found connected with spiritual success, and with social edification.

But all this depends on the spirit of prayer; and if God is to be honoured in this sanctuary by his assembled people—if you are to comfort the heart of your pastor—if he is to succeed in the hallowed work to which he has devoted himself, you must enter into the spirit of this apostolic injunction, and pray for him, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified. Your own interest is intimately connected with it. And remember, brethren,

5thly. And finally on this point, *that in proportion to the spirit of prayer, really and honestly cherished, will you be prepared to manifest the spirit of activity, of liberality, and of Christian zeal.*

Holy constancy of prayer will regulate all the motions of the inward man, and all the actions of the outward man; and you will be holy in all manner of conversation, in proportion as you walk humbly with God, take hold of his strength, and maintain a daily correspondence with heaven, and live not to yourselves, but to Him who died for you and rose again.

But this apostolic injunction, while it brings before us the great objects of Christian zeal, and enjoins the duty of prayer in order to their accomplishment, in the

III. Place, REFERS TO KNOWN INSTANCES OF SUCCESS, AS A GROUND OF ENCOURAGEMENT. "*Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you.*"

I am confident, my brethren, that without intending to awaken any feelings whatever allied to self-complacency on your part, much less which could subject the speaker to the charge of adulation, I may with humble confidence and devout gratitude make the appeal of the apostle, in the text, to the church of Christ before me. You, I am persuaded, are not taught by your pastor to be satisfied with

the success which has been secured. You have too high a standard of character, and motive, and principle, brought before you, to feel self-complacency; you know that every statement of the truth to which you are accustomed to listen is intended to abase you before God—to produce the deepest personal humiliation—and, oh, for that humiliation that elevates the standard, both of your efforts and of your hopes! Still, humiliation does not forbid gratitude; and abasement before God, on account of our personal shortcomings, and our multiplied transgressions, is not incompatible with thanksgiving for what he has done hitherto, in us or by us. And if in any measure the word of the Lord is glorified—if the church of God is enlarged—if those are brought into connection with the church, who not long before were walking in paths of folly and of sin—if there are continued and repeated acknowledgments before God, and the church is constantly saying, "These, where have they been, and who hath begotten me these?"—and if, as the effect of these additions, your hearts are continually rejoicing in the progress of the truth, in the conversion of sinners, I may say to my brethren, "Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, *even as it is with you.*" Bless God and take courage. Be not satisfied with the past—be not satisfied with the present—but be concerned that in all other churches, in every place where the name of Jesus is recorded—under every pastoral administration where the truth is proclaimed, and the ordinances of the Redeemer are administered, the word of the Lord may be the power of God to salvation—may be glorified among you, and in like manner glorified among others.

How was it glorified among the believers at Thessalonica? It was glorified by faith—it was glorified by the liberality of the church—by the patience of hope—by the self-denial of their liberality. The word through them sounded out into all the surrounding region, and many turned from dumb idols to serve the living God through their instrumentality. Pray that the word of the Lord

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may have free course every where else, as it has been glorified among you. And why did the apostle thus refer to known instances of success as a ground of encouragement? For two reasons. *As an illustration of what God can do, and as a pledge of what God will do.*

May I not say to some who are members of the church of Christ here, Is there any case of depravity, of opposition to the truth, of ignorance of vital interests, greater than that which you yourselves once exhibited? Look upon the history of your own conversion; consider how the arm of the Lord has been made bare in turning you yourselves; how the word was glorified in bringing you to the Redeemer; how the ministry of God's servant was honoured in your conversion! Pray that others, by the same power, in connexion with the same truth, may be led to the feet of the Redeemer. There is nothing which God has done that does not encourage the hope of a still greater manifestation of his power and of his mercy; and there is nothing that we are warranted to expect him to accomplish that he has not already effected. The power that is requisite to convert the world to himself is not greater than the power that has converted your heart, and turned you, from being enemies, to be his friends, and led you to the obedience of the truth as it is in Jesus. Therefore the apostle, you perceive, reasoned on this ground to encourage the believers at Thessalonica to pray. He knew that the experience of divine energy in their own conversion warranted the most enlarged expectations of success. He knew they could not refer to themselves without thinking of what the mighty grace of God had effected, and therefore he indulged in all the confidence of future triumph. Expect great things, and then you will attempt great things.

The subject, my brethren, DEMANDS INQUIRY. Has the word of the Lord been glorified in you? I would not pass by the opportunity which the first service of God in this place presents for making a direct appeal to those before me whose consciences tell them that they have not yet received the truth in the love of it.

Oh, if this opening service shall be so followed with the blessing of the Most High that some hardened spirit shall be subdued—some careless hearer brought to experience anxious solicitude—some wanderer restored to the paths of wisdom and of peace—there will indeed be reason to rejoice in the recollection of this day. It will be hallowed in the future remembrance of the church, and even with thanksgiving through eternity. Are there some connected with the congregation, especially assembling together with this church—are there any brought by other circumstances to the services of this day, who have been living without God in the world? You are asking, perhaps, why all this excitement—why this manifestation of liberality—why this concern to enlarge the place of worship, to increase the number of hearers, to bring more within the sound of the gospel, and the administration of the ordinances of God? Ah, my friends! you have never yet reflected on the value of the soul—you have never yet reflected on the danger to which you are exposed—you have never yet considered eternity in all its appalling realities—you have never yet asked, "What shall we do to be saved?"—you have never yet fled to the refuge of mercy. If you had, there would be no surprise. You would not wonder at any effort, or any possible demonstration of zeal, or devotedness, or charity, in promoting the object for which we are this day assembled; and if there had been ten thousand times more zeal and liberality displayed, still you could feel no astonishment, if you had ever felt the value of the soul. The very feeling of surprise that the professors of religion manifest any solicitude, or make any efforts, for the objects connected with the truth of God, the word of God, the honour and the glory of God—that very feeling is an indication that you have never yet thought about your own eternal destinies. I beseech you to remember that the word of God must be to you the savour of life unto life, or death unto death. Remember that if you are not receiving it, you are rejecting it—that there is no neutrality here, no middle state and condition

here—you are either for God or against him. We live in eventful times—we live in times that are bringing principle to action—we live in times that are trying men—that are exhibiting the true character of men, whether they are the friends of God, or the enemies of God; whether they are the friends of man, or the enemies of man; and it becomes each individual, capable of reflection, to look at passing events, and to consider what will be their future results: and, above all, to look forward to the period when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and when the convulsions of empires, and the destinies of thrones, will be nothing, and less than nothing, compared with the value of an individual immortality. Yes, big as present events are with the fate of empires, important as are the results of pending circumstances in the present condition of nations, all these results, and all these events, are less than nothing and vanity—are but as the shadow of the morning—are but as the feverish dream of night—are but of momentary insignificance, when compared with the immortality of one individual hearer of the gospel this morning. Your salvation, your individual salvation, my friends, is of more consequence than the state and the condition of the whole inhabited globe, as to every thing secular, and as to every thing temporal: for “what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?—or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” I then turn your attention to your own salvation, and would lead you to ask—Is this word of the Lord glorified in me? Is this word of the Lord glorified by me? Am I obeying the gospel of God?

Let this subject *encourage hope*. The word of the Lord *shall* be glorified; for the purposes of the Most High—the promises of the everlasting covenant—the state of the Christian church—the prospects of the world—support our confidence.

The subject *enjoins activity*. “Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

## THE PULPIT GALLERY.

NO. IX.

REV. JOSEPH FLETCHER, D.D.  
*Of Stepney.*

DR. FLETCHER was born in Chester, in the year 1784. In his native city he obtained a classical education, and in his eighteenth year was removed to Hoxton College. In 1804 he went to the University of Glasgow, and remained about three years, preparing himself for the ministry among the dissenters. In 1807, he graduated, taking the degree of A.M. and was ordained to the pastoral charge of a congregation the same year. He shortly afterwards became divinity tutor in the Dissenters' College at Blackburn, at the same time discharging the duties of a pastor over the Independent church in that town. In 1822 he received a call from the church at Stepney to become their minister, which he accepted. The university in which he graduated has not been inattentive to his preaching, his principles, his character, and the manner in which he spends his time. In 1830 he was honoured by the *Senatus Academicus* of the University of Glasgow with the diploma of Doctor in Divinity.

The preaching of Mr. F. is distinguished by various excellencies. His appearance commands respect. His capacious forehead, his eloquent and expressive eye, unite with the seriousness and solemnity of his deportment, to convince every attentive observer that he is about to hear an intelligent, eloquent, pious sermon. His voice is good, and occasionally powerful; his diction is easy and graceful; his action is chaste and impressive; and there is an impassioned glow about his whole address which causes the hearer to listen with eager attention. His exordiums are pertinent, and often striking, his arrangements simple and luminous; his conclusions pointed and energetic. His whole sermons are indicative of a mind richly furnished for the office of the ministry, by retirement, meditation, and prayer; and are well calculated to inform the judgment, to convince the conscience, and to lead to the Saviour.

## SERMON XXI.

### THE EXCELLENCY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

BY THE REV. J. BLACKBURN.

*"The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth purified seven times."—Psalm xii. 6.*

It was once said to our blessed Master, "Thou bearest witness of thyself, and thy witness, therefore, is not true;" and some may be prepared to say, "You quote a text commending the Scriptures from the Scriptures themselves; and, as the Scriptures commend themselves, such a commendation does not come with much force to our minds." We would cite what the Scriptures say to you, brethren; but we are anxious this evening to discuss the question whether they are excellent or not, and shall only adopt these words as supplying a convenient mode of advancing what we have to state.

Now, in our text I perceive—

I. A holy description of the sacred writings; and,

II. A striking illustration of the scrutiny they have endured. We have,

I. A HOLY DESCRIPTION OF THE SACRED WRITINGS. They are called in our text, "The words of the Lord."

Here, then, we have a description,

1st. *Of their high authority.* This is plainly perceived throughout the whole of these books. We find that the men who wrote these books say, "The Spirit of God spake by me, and his word was upon my tongue"—"Thus saith the Lord"—"The burden of the word of the Lord"—"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Now, those men who

wrote these books thus claim high authority for what they wrote, and plainly assert that they were under the influence of the Spirit of God, who inspired them to write what is here contained.

On the subject of inspiration I am disposed to admit that it is not necessary we should suppose that they had the same degree of inspiration in all cases. One degree of inspiration was necessary to foretell future events, and to reveal truths professedly unknown among men; and a lesser degree of inspiration was necessary to narrate facts which the writers saw, and which it was only necessary that they should be guided by the Spirit of God to record in the best possible manner; so that, while we say they were under the influence of inspiration, we do not mean to assert that it required the same degree of inspiration to write the Proverbs of Solomon or the gospel of St. Matthew, as it required to reveal what should be the fate of nations centuries to come, and what should be the way of salvation for those who were perishing without a Redeemer. But we perceive that all the men who wrote claim a high authority for what they wrote. They were honest men—they were holy men, who loved purity—men who commended integrity and uprightness in all their writings; and one cannot conceive that men who thus advocate holiness, who declare that liars, and adulterers, and all unjust persons, shall come under the wrath of God—men who could write such pure morality themselves, were at

the same time guilty of a detestable fraud, and were imposing upon those who should read their writings the idea that this morality had come from God, when they gathered it we know not where.

You may be ready to say, "Yes, these good men might have a consciousness that they were under divine influence, but how are we to know it? We cannot see them; we cannot enter into their state of mind; and therefore, though they have stated that their writings are the word of God, how shall we attest to our own satisfaction that such was the case?" Now, friends, our text supplies us not only with the high authority of these books, but—

2dly. *With their inherent sanctity*: for the text says, "The words of the Lord are pure words." They possess an inherent worth; and it has justly been said that every word of God is pure—that as metals are made free from the alloy by the action of fire, so the Scriptures are free from all insincerity, all error, all deceit, all defilement. And, my friends, I may appeal to you. Are not all their requirements just?—are not all their precepts holy?—are not all their statements reasonable? May we not say that the Scriptures are indeed "holy, just, and good?" And when we remember that, from the last book of Moses to the last book of John, a period of fifteen hundred years rolled on—so that from the time that Moses laid down his pen, to the time that John laid down his pen, fifteen hundred years had elapsed—that they were written in different countries, under different circumstances, in different languages; and yet, now that the writings are brought together in one book, if you compare spiritual things with spiritual things, studying one book with another, you will find such harmony of sentiment, such a blessed and luminous harmony of doctrine, and of precept, and of promise, as must show you that there is no alloy here of error, no alloy here of insincerity, no alloy here of ungodliness.

But I know, friends, it has been declared by some unblushing infidels, in this city, that the Bible is the most immoral book in the world. It has been

printed and circulated among the operative classes of society, and they have been taught to regard it in that light, that the Bible is the most immoral book in the world. And the way in which it is proved is this: they cite the different texts which contain accounts of grossly immoral actions, and then they say, "See what an immoral book the Bible is!" because it records these immoral actions. But the question is, Could the Scriptures have given a faithful portraiture of human nature without having recorded such actions? Do you say that the mirror is impure and false, because it faithfully exhibits the distorted features and the crooked frame of some unhappy cripple who may gaze upon it? The mirror is pure, the glass is true, but the object reflected happens to be ugly and deformed; and thus the deformity is not in the glass, but in the subject of which it treats.

Now let me entreat you to remember that the slander to which I have referred is put down at once by asking the question, In what style are these acts recorded, and for what purpose are they written? Are these unholy transactions that are recorded in this book written in a flowing, ample, descriptive style—in the style of a Scott or a Byron, with finely enriched and glowing terms, to impress the facts upon the imagination, and to make them lay hold of the feelings of the heart? Are they not detailed in plain, short sentences—things called by their right names—and so called and stated that the reader, instead of loving the thing, hates it? Oh! if a man sit down to write a book which is to contain narratives of depravity, and these are to be wrought up till they are made palatable to our corrupt nature, it is one thing; but if a man describe the depravity of human nature to deter men from practising that depravity, it is another; and let any man look at the word of God, and see whether those records are not intended to make such as peruse them, not in love with vice, but with virtue, and not to practise iniquity, but to aspire to holiness. We may appeal to the fact, to prove the purity of the sacred volume—that those who have studied it most, those who are most

familiar with it, the most completely under its influence, are the very class of society whom we find most to exemplify all the social and public virtues; and to such an appeal there can be no contradiction.

Oh, my friends! our modern infidels are not so candid as those who lived in the eighteenth century. Rousseau could say, "I will confess that the majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the gospel hath its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers, with all their pomp of diction; how mean, how contemptible are they, compared with the Scriptures! Is it possible that a book at once so simple and sublime should be merely the work of man?" Oh, that he had been enabled to answer the inquiry to the saving of his soul!

Having thus noticed the high authority and inherent purity of the Scriptures, I would notice,

3dly. *Their intrinsic worth:* for our text says, "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." The late celebrated Bishop Horsley read the passage thus:—"The words of ИЖОВАН are pure words, silver essayed in a crucible of earth, gold purified seven times." Thus the Scriptures are compared to the finest silver and gold; and this opinion of their intrinsic worth has been entertained by some of the most distinguished servants of God. David says concerning the Scriptures, "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb." And in the one hundred and nineteenth psalm, and seventy-second verse, we find him saying, "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."

Now, why do we see the sacred writings spoken of as being as precious even as gold and silver? Because they speak of God in a way most reasonable, and they describe the state of man in harmony with our own experience of its truth. They speak of religion in a way that satisfies man upon the most anxious questions—a future state of rewards and

punishments—the pardon of sin by a Mediator—the means of grace by which our fallen nature may be restored to rectitude and holiness. These are things about which *natural* religion has never been able to supply us with satisfactory information. Philosophers may speak of godliness, and speak of what man's duty is; but, as we have often had occasion to observe, they are like individuals who turn their backs on the rising sun, and say, "See what a light our philosophy gives!" whereas all the light spread on the landscape is borrowed from the luminary on which they have turned their backs. But natural religion never was able to teach man, with certainty, that there was a future state of rewards and punishments; natural religion never taught man that he might expect, with certainty, the pardon of sin through a Mediator; natural religion never taught man that there were spiritual influences with God by which he could restore to rectitude and holiness our fallen nature. If you feel the stirrings of immortality within you—if you be led to ask yourself, What is to become of me when my body dies and spirit departs?—who can answer that question but he who believes the Bible? When you feel that you are a sinner before God, and ask yourselves, How can your sins be forgiven?—who can answer that question but he who believes in the Bible? When you feel temptations warring against your characters, and against your interests, and against your souls, and you ask, How can we be delivered from the power of temptation?—who can answer that question but one who believes in the Bible? And those who read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the truths of the Bible, are those who can answer these questions to the joy and rejoicing of your heart.

Now, I hope I have shown some reasons for asserting the high authority, and the inherent sanctity, and the intrinsic worth, of the sacred Scriptures; and I proceed to notice,

II. THE STRIKING ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE SCRUTINY THEY HAVE ENDURED WHICH OUR TEXT SUPPLIES. "The words of the Lord are pure words: as

silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times."

Here you perceive that there is a reference to the searching process of a refiner, by which the presence of an alloy of copper, or any other metal, is detected in the gold or silver; and all the copper, or lead, or any other baser metal, is searched out and extracted from the pure ore. And as the precious metals are thus searched by the action of fire, and the art of the refiner, so the word of God has been searched. For allow me to say that though you may hear those who declaim against the Bible say that it is the book of priests—and people have been led by priestcraft all their days, and take the Bible because they are told it is a good book—yet I will show you, before I close these remarks, that the word of God has passed under a scrutiny like that of fire, and that it has come forth as gold seven times purified. And this part of the subject will lead me to talk on matters which are not ordinarily introduced into pulpit discussion, but which are interesting and valuable, because they inform the minds of those who are inquiring upon such topics. Now, I will say,

1st. *The sacred writings have been the subject of scrutiny and investigation.* There have been men in this city who have possessed *impudence* enough—I do not qualify the term—to stand up before an audience of the inhabitants of London, and assert that the Bible was a book manufactured by priests in the dark ages, and at some time—they know not exactly the name, the date, or the place—but at some period this book was introduced into circulation, and imposed upon the public.

Now, it is very providential for the Christian cause that there is abundant evidence to put this down. In the first place, it is known by profane history that there was such a man as Alexander the Great, who built the city of Alexandria in Egypt, and who was anxious to encourage the learning of the known world. He was anxious that the Jews who dwelt in Alexandria, as well as the Greeks, and who spoke the Greek language, should have a translation of the Old Testament

made for their use. Thus two hundred and eighty-seven years before our Lord and Saviour came into the world the Old Testament was translated into Greek; and what is called by the learned the *Septuagint*—that is, the translation made by the seventy, which is a Greek translation—existed between two and three hundred years before our Lord appeared on earth. Now, this book is extant to the present day; it is to be found in all the libraries of the learned throughout Europe; and this historical fact at least shows that the Old Testament existed nearly three hundred years before Jesus Christ came into our world. But, then, in reference to the five books of Moses, there happens to be other proof. The five books of Moses, or what we call the *Pentateuch*, were translated, or rather existed, in what is called the *Samaritan*, which is supposed to be the original Hebrew tongue. When Judah and Israel separated, in the reign of Rehoboam, the Israelites went to Samaria, and took with them what they call the *Samaritan Pentateuch*, while the tribe of Judah kept the book also. By their going into Babylon the character was altered; but the Samaritans kept their Pentateuch in its original state. Thus you perceive that there have been two distinct copies of the Pentateuch; and as the Samaritans on the one hand, and the Jews on the other, were very bitter the one against the other, and the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, it was like two angry clients, each of whom was keeping the counterpart of a bond, the one not allowing the other to have any thing to do with it; and, when both these documents come into court, they are found to agree with a harmony which proves their value and truth. When we come to compare the Pentateuch of the Samaritans with the five books of Moses which the Jews possess, the variations are unimportant; and the one thus confirms the other in the most interesting way. And there happened to live such a man as Josephus, who was a very learned Jew. This Josephus was acquainted with the Roman emperor Titus Vespasian, and wrote, for the use of the Romans, a history of his

own country in Greek. In this work there is a catalogue of the books which the Jews regarded to be sacred books; and there we have the list of those books that are found in the Old Testament. The list was circulated in this book within eighty years of the Lord's death, and circulated, as far as manuscripts could be circulated, throughout the Roman empire. Hence the Old Testament evidently is not a book of yesterday. The Jews have been scattered all over the world during the last eighteen hundred years; and you have only to step to the neighbouring synagogue, and ask the chief rabbi how long the parchments and documents they have have existed, and he will laugh to scorn the foolish quibblings of those who desire to invalidate the antiquity of the Old Testament. These facts condemn them.

After the Christian religion was established, the Old Testament became the property of the Christians as well as the Jews. Now you know that the Christians and the Jews did not agree, and consequently there was a mutual jealousy between them—just as I have shown you existed between the Jews and the Samaritans. In consequence of this jealousy the Christian doctors looked sharply after the Jewish rabbies, that they did not alter the text; and the Jewish rabbies looked sharply after the Christian doctors, that they did not alter the text; because, if the Jewish rabbies had altered the prophecies respecting Christ, the Christians would have said, "You are corrupting God's word, to show that the Messiah has not come;" and if, on the other hand, the Christian doctors had been meddling with the text, to make it appear that the advent of Christ had taken place, the Jews would have said, "You have altered the text—it is not so in our books." Thus you see that, by the mutual jealousies of Jews and Christians, the Old Testament Scriptures have been preserved to the present time in an uncorrupted state; so that, when efforts were made, a few years ago, to get a new edition of the Hebrew Scriptures, eleven hundred and fifty Jewish manuscripts were compared, and the variations

were so unimportant as scarcely to affect the sense. This shows that the word of God has been tried, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, so far as the *Old Testament* is concerned, and nothing faulty has been found in it.

Then let us look at the *New Testament*. How do I know that the books of the New Testament have existed from the time they profess? Why it happens, as I have said, very providentially, that there are writings called the writings of the Christian fathers, writings both in Greek and Latin, which exist to the present day, and which were composed by pastors and bishops of churches at a very early period, in which they quote the New Testament, both the gospels and epistles; so that those who have read and consulted the Greek and Latin fathers have declared that the whole body of the gospels and epistles might be gathered from them, if the New Testament were to be destroyed. Now it is most important to think that there is so much of the Scriptures mixed up with the writings of those great men who wrote in the second, third, and fourth centuries—that there is to be found imbedded in their writings, as insects in amber, preserved from age to age, the substance of the New Testament. This might be said in reference to more recently published works. If all the puritan and nonconformist works that were ever written were collated, I have no doubt that you might gather out of them a large portion of the New Testament. As they interwove a large part of the New Testament, so these fathers did the same; and thus we see that the writings must have existed at that time, or else they could not have been quoted. Then there are things which are called *ancient versions*, that is, translations of the New Testament made at a very early period. There was the Syriac translation, made in the second century; then the Coptic, supposed to be made in the third or fourth century; then there is the Armenian, which is supposed to have been made about the same time. Now these are so many proofs that the word of God has been preserved as a genuine document; and, when you

think of that fact, you have a clear proof that it is not a forgery. And, my dear friends, I cannot resist the feeling which at this moment comes over me, to remind you that in this very place there preached, for many years, that man who, under God, was made the instrument of settling this question, by his most laborious researches—I mean the venerable Dr. Lardner, whose writings contain a storehouse of evidence in favour of the credibility and genuineness of the Christian Scriptures.

But there is another order of scrutiny through which the sacred Scriptures have passed; and that is,

2dly. *Antiquarian and scientific research.*

The Bible, as you know, contains much that relates to the creation of the world, and the changes which have passed upon our globe; and there are multitudes of individuals who have affected to be very profound on these matters, and have supposed that they have found, by the discoveries of science, that the books of Moses were only old wives' fables, and deserved no credit. I am anxious, therefore, to quote to you the words of an eminent scientific gentleman—I mean Professor Jameson, of Edinburgh. He is not a clergyman, but a layman. He undertook the editing of an edition of Cuvier's Theory of the Earth; and he makes these remarks in the preface, on the subject of the scriptural account of the creation:—"Although the Mosaic account of the creation of the world is an inspired writing, and consequently rests on evidence independent of human observation and experience, still it is interesting, and in many respects important, to know that it coincides with the various phenomena observable in the mineral kingdom. The structure of the earth, and the mode of distribution of extraneous fossils or petrifications, are so many direct evidences of the truth of the Scripture account of the formation of the earth; and they might be used as proofs of its author having been inspired, because the mineralogical facts discovered by modern naturalists were unknown to the sacred historian. Even the periods of time, the six days of the Mosaic description, are

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not inconsistent with our theories of the earth. There are, indeed, many physical considerations which render it probable that the motions of the earth may have been slower during the time of its formation, than after it was formed, and, consequently, that the day, or period between morning and evening, may have been indefinitely longer than it is at present. If such a hypothesis is at all admissible, it will go far in supporting the opinion which has long been maintained on this subject, by many of the ablest and most learned Scripture critics. The deluge, one of the grandest natural events described in the Bible, is equally confirmed, with regard to its extent and the period of its occurrence, by a careful study of the various phenomena observed on and near the earth's surface. The age of the human race, also a most important inquiry, is satisfactorily determined by an appeal to natural appearances; and the pretended great antiquity of some nations, so much insisted on by certain philosophers, is thereby shown to be entirely unfounded." These are the opinions of a distinguished naturalist, occupying a professor's chair in Edinburgh, and editing one of the works of one of the most distinguished naturalists in Europe, who is recently dead. Here is the scrutiny of God's word—a scrutiny of science, and science doing homage to the testimony of revelation.

And so we may say, not only in reference to scientific pursuits, such as geology, but in respect to geography, and the customs of the East. The Bible describes many of the usages and customs which have existed among the people where the book was written. Now, our countrymen, and other Europeans, have visited those countries, they have explored those regions; and we have some of the most respectable testimonies—the testimonies of laymen, and some of them not believers in revelation—who have declared that they found the Bible, especially the New Testament, the best guide to Palestine; and that, by the statements therein contained, they found better directions than they derived from any other source. And so we may speak in refer-



ence to the labours of antiquarians. There was a time when the infidel philosophers of Europe affected to have a great perception of the blow that was to be given to revealed religion by the disclosures which should be made from Chinese literature. Now one of our own Christian missionaries has mastered the Chinese language, has produced a lexicon containing all the words of that extraordinary tongue, and has opened up all their literature. And, with all this done, have they found any thing that can oppose the testimony of Scripture? Have they found one "musty record" that can put down the wise and faithful sayings of sacred writ? Oh, no! And then Egypt was to be a mighty source from whence we were to derive information to put down revelation. There was the mysterious zodiac, which was supposed to settle the Mosaic chronology for ever, and to show the world was I know not what age. All these things are explained; and, instead of yielding any thing to help the infidel cause, it has yielded every thing to help the Christian cause. Belzoni, in visiting the tomb of Zammah, found a representation of the Jews held in captivity, marking the truth of what is contained in the Kings and Chronicles concerning the triumph of that monarch over the Jewish people.

I might say, also, that the word of God has been tried by a third order—not only by these critical investigations, and by these antiquarian researches, but,

3dly. *By philosophical and moral discoveries.* As I have already said, all the philosophy of China has been opened, all the learning of the Hindoos has been opened; all the simple children of nature in the islands of the South Seas, and the inhabitants of South America, ever knew—all the people of Africa ever knew, has all been brought to light; and what has been the result of the combined discoveries of the human mind in reference to morals and religion? Why, we have found that they have been poor—that they have been unsatisfactory—that they have been confused; and, as the light of the sun appears more glorious by the glimmering of the gas-lights in the streets

on a summer's morning, so the light of Scripture has appeared more glorious when compared with the feeble tapers which the human intellect in various parts of the world has lit up.

Now I will quote to you, as I have already done, the testimony of another layman on this subject, and that one shall be the testimony of our own countryman, so eminent for oriental literature and good morals—I allude to Sir William Jones. He says, "The Scriptures contain, independently of a divine origin, more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, purer morality, more important history, and finer strains both of poetry and eloquence, than could be collected within the same compass from all other books that were ever composed, in any age, or in any idiom. The two parts of which the Scriptures consist are connected by a chain of compositions which bear no resemblance, in form or style, to any that can be produced from the stores of Grecian, Indian, Russian, or even Arabian learning. The antiquity of these compositions no man can doubt; and the unrestrained application of them to events long subsequent to their publication, is a solid ground of belief that they were genuine productions, and consequently inspired." Now this is not the declaration of some uneducated Christian minister, but it is the deliberate judgment of the greatest oriental scholar, perhaps, our country has produced—a man whose statue adorns our own cathedral, and whose name will live as long as British literature continues. This man declares that the Bible contains more true sublimity than could be found in all the other books that were ever composed in any age or country. Now the testimony of another individual to prove this shall be from the writings of Chateaubriand, the most distinguished member of the French literati of the present day. He says, "The productions most foreign to our manners, the sacred books of the infidel nations, the Zendavesta of the Parsees, the Vidan of the Brahmins, the Koran of the Turks, the Edda of the Scandinavians, the Sanscrit poems, the maxims of Confucius, excite in us no surprise

we find in all these works the ordinary chain of human ideas: they have all some resemblance to each other, both in tone and ideas. The Bible alone is like none of them; it is a monument detached from all the others. Explain it to a Tartar, to a Caffra, to an American savage; put it into the hands of a bonze or a dervise: they will all be equally astonished by it—a fact which borders on the miraculous. Twenty authors, living at periods very distant from one another, composed the sacred books; and though they are written in twenty different styles, yet these styles, equally inimitable, are not to be met with in any other performance. The New Testament, so different in its spirit from the Old, nevertheless partakes with the latter of this astonishing originality.”

Now these are not the testimonies of priests; they are the testimonies of laymen—of men who have travelled in every part of the globe, and who have become acquainted with the literature of all nations; and what they, as scholars, pronounce concerning this book, we, as Christians, are able to confirm. The good Spirit of God has made it to our souls the foundation of our hopes, and the solace of our days.

After having shown you, as I have thus attempted to do, that the word of God has been tried by a threefold process, and come out of the furnace like gold seven times purified, I would make a *personal appeal* to you, and say, How is it that you venture to neglect such a book as this? God has preserved it; God put it into the hearts of our pious ancestors to translate it; God put it into the hearts of men, of our own time, to print it so extensively, by the labours of the Bible Society, that now every individual may possess, at the smallest possible price, the word of God in his own tongue. This book is declared in our text to be pure as silver, tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times; and this book now invites your attention.

Oh, my friends! I am no enemy to *general knowledge*; I am thankful to the Society for Promoting Useful Knowledge; I am thankful to the Society for Promoting Religious Knowledge, for putting forth penny, six-penny, and shilling publications, inviting you to read them; but let me remind you that time is short—that the opportunities for reading are but limited, and that this, the greatest and the best of books, this book which is “a light to your feet, and lamp to your path,” which guides you in the way to heaven, and in the way to immortality, invites you to peruse it. And shall it lie upon your shelves, covered with dust, untouched, forsaken? Let me entreat you, then, to form the habit of reading some portion of God’s word every day—to remember that this blessed book can, by the Spirit, enlighten your minds. Oh, then, cry, “Lord, open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law!” If you come to it with a teachable mind, you shall find that it will instruct you in the clearest morality—that it will supply you with the most blessed consolation—that it will transform your mind from sin to holiness—that it will form the foundation of your hopes of blessed immortality. Let me entreat you, then, to remember these words of the Redeemer—he who is able to save sinners: “Search the Scriptures,” said the Son of God, “for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they which testify of me.”

Should there be any one here disposed to take up this book to trifle with it, let me quote to him two lines from a poem penned by one of the greatest geniuses that have adorned our empire, and whose intellectual light has just been lost to us. He says, in a beautiful little poem on the Bible,

“Better had he ne’er been born  
Who reads to doubt, who reads to scorn.”

God grant that you may read to believe and to obey! Amen.

## THE ASCENSION.

THE humiliation of the Son of God was now drawing rapidly to a close. He had "accomplished his decease at Jerusalem:" he had risen victorious from the grave: and, during forty days, he had been living among his disciples—convincing them, "by many infallible proofs," that he was indeed restored to life. There remained but one more thing to be done—that for which he had prayed, in John xvii. 5—"And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." This prayer, as you have heard in my text, was fulfilled; he "ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things," and become Head over his church for ever.—The text sets before us,

## I. THE LAST ACTS OF THE REDEEMER ON EARTH.

1. *He selects a suitable place* from which to take his departure.—He had conversed with his friends at Jerusalem, "in an inner chamber," "when the doors were shut . . . for fear of the Jews;" and if secrecy was desirable then, it was now much more so. The last glorious display was not intended for malicious Pharisees, for unbelieving Sadducees and Scribes. Evidence enough had been given to them, and more would hereafter be added. The *public* ministry of Jesus ended with his great sacrifice; and what remains of earthly intercourse shall be devoted exclusively to his friends. He therefore "led them out" from Jerusalem, "as far as to Bethany."

It has been argued that this could not be the town of Martha and Mary—because *that* Bethany was two miles from Jerusalem; whereas the apostles are said to have returned from this sight only "a sabbath-day's journey"—that is to say, one mile. But why may we not suppose that he first visited the town of Bethany, even if he did afterwards return part of the way, before he ascended up to heaven? The supposition is far from being improbable; and, if such were the fact, what a touching circumstance was here! He cannot forget Martha, and her sister,

and Lazarus! Whom he loveth, "he loveth unto the end:" and as they are to see him no more, they shall be of those who see him the last. It is one of the manifold proofs of the Saviour's kind affection. Love him, brethren, as that pious family did, and you shall see greater things than this. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant."

2. *He solemnly blesses his disciples.*—He had by his deeds been blessing them, from the first moment of their acquaintance with him; for he had converted their souls, and had instructed them in the things relating to his kingdom. But he now does it by an express outward act. With uplifted hands, he calls on his Father to protect, comfort, sanctify, and prosper them.—If you would know what gifts that blessing included, you may see them fully enumerated in John xvii.: he could ask no greater—he would ask no less—than are there recorded. "Neither prayed he for these alone, but for them also which should afterwards believe on him through their word." Happy believer! who can by faith see those hands of love still stretched over him, and apply to himself the Saviour's blessing! May such be your privilege and mine: for I wot that he whom thou, Lord, bleasest, is blessed indeed.—At length,

3. *He ascends up to heaven.*—Here was no imposition! St. Luke, in another place, tells us that the act was done "while they beheld." My text describes the circumstantial order of the event: "He was parted from them"—literally, "he stood aside from them;" both to prevent interruption, and that all might see the whole transaction. Then—"he was carried up;" moving towards heaven in full view of the whole party, till, at length, "a cloud received him out of their sight." Carried? by whom? By hosts of invisible beings—"angels that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word." For now was fulfilled that which was spoken of the Lord by David—"The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy

place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive." Doubtless there were angels assisting on the occasion; for we find two of them returning, in visible form, to comfort the disciples with a promise, that he would hereafter come again in like manner from heaven. As, therefore, we believe that he rose from the dead, so also do we believe that he is "gone into heaven . . . angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him."

## II. THE FIRST ACTS OF THE REDEEMED AFTER HIS DEPARTURE.

1. *They worshipped him.*—Remember that! The appointed teachers of the Christian religion "worshipped" Christ—it was their very first act after they had ceased to behold him. And do not suppose that it was merely some respectful inclination of the body—such as is meant in our marriage service. No—it was holy adoration, as to the invisible God; and accompanied, doubtless, by such words as Thomas was once permitted to use without censure—"My Lord, and my God!" Had they given such honour to the two angels, they would have met with a rebuke like that which St. John afterwards received under similar circumstances—"See thou do it not! . . . worship God!" But in worshipping Jesus, they *did* worship God; and were therefore blameless.

2. *They were filled with joy—great joy.* O how different from what they had once anticipated! "Now I go my way to him that sent me; and because I say this, sorrow hath filled your heart." But now, when he *does* this, they are "filled with joy." Whence this difference? It was because Jesus had now opened their understanding to discern the mystery of his sufferings and his glory. The Comforter, moreover, I am inclined to believe, was immediately sent down with his sanctifying influences; although for his miraculous gifts they had yet to wait ten days longer.

3. *In the use of appointed means they sought and expected his gifts of grace.*—In Jerusalem were they to receive the "promise of the Father;" therefore they at once returned thither. On their arrival,

behold them "continually in the temple, praising and blessing God!" continually—that is, at every appointed service. Surrounded as they were by formal and ignorant worshippers, how different their views, hopes, and feelings!—Yet such, brethren, as theirs were—such, by divine grace, may yours also be. What though others gain no blessing in public worship, in hearing the word, in the holy communion; yet this need not be the case with you. Only look up to the Lord of the temple, and he will make it a Bethel to your soul. "In the breaking of bread" Jesus himself shall be "known of you," if by faith you seek him. O, then "enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."—*Rev. J. Jowett, A.M.*

## PAGANISM.

THE dead are not always forgotten by the pagan negroes: they resort annually to their graves, and offer food and liquor to their departed relatives. A negro mother in Jamaica was known, for thirteen years, to make this annual visit to the grave of her daughter, and, in an agony of feeling, to offer her oblation. Thus "they sorrow without hope." We respect the strength of the affection; we lament its downward, earthly tendency: all the thoughts of that poor mother were in the grave with her child, and the only object of that unabated love was the mere dust of a dissolved frame. Such is heathenism! Melting and mournful thoughts steal over the recollections of the bereaved Christian mother too, and time has no power to dry up the fountain of her tears; years may pass away, but the memory of the forms over which she has hung with maternal fondness suffers no decay; it keeps its place to the last hour of the most extended life. But, when she thinks of her children, she thinks of them as in *heaven*, not as in the *grave*; and, urged onward by this hope through her remaining pilgrimage, she hastens to embrace them again in the kingdom of God.—*R. Watson.*

## SERMON XXII.

### THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE.

BY THE REV. JOSEPH SOMMERVILLE,

MINISTER OF ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL, GLASGOW.

*"Choose ye this day whom ye will serve."*—Josh. xiv. 15.

THERE are few delusions more fatal, and yet more common, than that of persons labouring to negotiate a treaty betwixt the service of sin and the service of holiness, striving to reconcile the claims of Christianity with the claims of the world, to make compatible the homage due to the Creator with the obedience and slavery required by the creature. Such individuals profess to entertain a veneration for the perfections and worship of the Deity; they acknowledge their readiness to submit to the obligations of piety; they own the legality of the divine authority; they evince an indefinite love and longing after the spiritual privileges and pre-eminences of the saints; and it would afford them the highest satisfaction, when the storms and conflicts of mortality are past, to be landed safe on the shore of paradise, and to be introduced to the perfect beatitudes and triumphs of immortality.

For the sake of reaping so invaluable a harvest of felicity; for the purpose of attaining to so brilliant a consummation of glory, they are willing to forego not a few temporal conveniences, and to submit to not a few sacrifices of ease and coarse indulgence; to cultivate certain principles, and to prosecute a particular course of conduct; to abstain from criminal pursuits, and to practise various restraints and personal mortifications. At the same time, they feel their habits of sin to be inherent and inveterate; their addiction to selfish and constitutional indulgences, violent and inordinate; their

propensity to consult their favourite tastes, and to gratify their sensual inclinations, too vehement to be relinquished.

The demands of religion they hold to be inconsistent with the requirements of worldly pleasure; they feel themselves to be too much curbed and fettered by the laws of the gospel, and they will not yield to the crucifixion of every corrupt affection, exercise that abnegation of self and sin, or make that entire and unconditional surrender of themselves to the influences of the truth, and to the power and life of godliness, which, nevertheless, they must acknowledge to be their supreme duty and highest interest.

In this dilemma, they labour for an accommodation of matters; they pant for a compromise of principle; they become solicitous to adopt a system of half measures; they are fain to see an alliance struck between the objects of sense and the things of the spirit—between the interests of time and the interests of eternity; while they are most desirous to unite, in their own persons, the opposite and distinctive characters of a friend of God and a friend of the world—a disciple of Christ and a votary of Belial; and they strain to secure the enjoyments of carnality, while they would not fall short of the recompense of righteousness. In a word, the summit of their ambition is, to reap all the advantages and delights peculiar to the two conditions—a state of nature and a state of grace—a state of unregeneracy and a state of conversion; to live on amicable terms with the adherents of both

parties; to maintain a kind of see-sawing between the votaries of dissipation and the children of holiness—to aim at once for earth and heaven; to “fear the Lord and to serve their own gods;” to have all the combined happiness which the gratifications of sense and time can afford, and to inherit all the felicities which Christianity can minister, and which immortality can supply.

But surely, my friends, it would be a superfluous waste of time and arguments, to stop to demonstrate the impossibility of uniting things so essentially distinct and discordant in their natures—of reconciling what is so absolutely and perfectly at variance—of harmonizing interests so totally dissimilar—of amalgamating elements, in their very essence, of utter and eternal contrariety.

Though the population of this globe is composed of many different races of men, discriminated by a thousand graduated shades of spiritual character and situation, yet are they all comprehended by the Spirit of God under two divisions only—the church and the world; believers and unbelievers; those who are in a state of spiritual death and condemnation, and those who are in a state of spiritual life and reconciliation; children of God, and children of the devil; heirs of grace, and heirs of wrath; those who are in Christ Jesus, and those who “lie in the wicked one.”

Between those two great and opposite classes, there is, even in this present life, “a great moral gulf fixed,” so that they who would pass from the one society to the other, are unable; and the broad line of separation and seclusion cannot, on any account, be violated. “He that is not with me,” says Christ, “is against me.” “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” Be assured, then, that in a matter of such infinite moment as this, it is impossible you can be any thing else than exclusives, or can, with any degree of safety or consistency, stand in doubt or incertitude. You must, of necessity, be either the friends or the

foes of God; either the devoted servants of Christ, or the avowed despisers of the great salvation; you must be enlisted either on Jehovah’s side, or on that of his adversary; for on no account can you, in this question, belong to an equivocal race, or occupy an intermediate or middle position.

In many cases of every day life, neutrality is not only lawful, but commendable. In many questions of intricate solution, and difficult interpretation, implicating the reputation, the property, or happiness of our fellow-men, where the evidence is dubious, and almost equally balanced, it may be the dictate at once of wisdom and discretion, to hold the judgment in suspense, and to come to no decision. In domestic feuds, in private dissensions, and in the fierce collision of stormy passions, it may be often advisable to stand neutral, and to take part with neither set of combatants, seeing interference may tend to irritate, rather than to reconcile—to exasperate, rather than to allay, animosities; to foment, rather than to heal, divisions. But it is far otherwise in matters of religion, and in the high interests of immortality. Here no reserve can be admitted—no demur or debate sanctioned—no discreet caution allowed—no indifference tolerated; for in this case, every motive, as it is most obvious, must be urgent and immediate, that you make an option, that you choose your side, and that you resolutely, and inflexibly, and for ever, adhere to it.

As you have, then, been constituted moral agents, left to the freedom of your own wills, with a capacity to choose and determine for yourselves, we ask you, in the language of the text, “whom you will this day serve?” And in propounding to you this question, it is the farthest possible from our intention to insinuate, that we regard it as one of small import, or of trivial or temporary moment, which may be evaded, disregarded, or postponed without great detriment or hazard to you eternal interests. On the contrary, we avow, that we consider this question as one of transcendent consequence, and infinite magnitude, proposed, not as the Shibboleth of a party, but as the grand

and paramount concern of all; that it embraces whatever can, to an immortal spirit, be most dear and vital—being auspicious or fatal to all his hopes for eternity, productive to him of unmeasured benefit, or of incalculable disaster. We do unequivocally and solemnly avow, that the one side of the alternative is life, that the reverse of the alternative is death; that paradise is on the one side, and perdition on the other; that the one choice lays the foundation of an empire of felicity and of glory, greater and happier a thousand fold than heart ever conceived; while the other decision will impregnate an infinitude of existence with lamentation, woe, and despair. In making your option, too, in this matter, you must stand solely on your own responsibility. You must of necessity be a party in this case, to your own eternal shame or renown, to your own enduring bliss or misery. The very nature of the case precludes the adoption of all coercive and compulsory measures. It rests with yourselves to determine, on which side the scale shall preponderate. The decision is committed into your own hands. The whole is left to your own discrimination and choice. Nothing remains for us but to make the proposals. Like advocates, we can do no more than state the case and plead the cause. You, the judges, sit and hear it tried, must weigh and sum up the evidence, return the verdict, and by that determination stand or fall for ever.

We propose, then, in the first place, to submit for your adoption, one of the two sides of the alternative specified; and, in the second place, to advert to the particular time when this election is to be made.

I. We are to submit to your choice one of the two sides of the alternative proposed. And the first particularized, is the tragical or fatal side.

If you listen to no other but the dictates of your own carnal and unrenewed inclinations; if it seem good unto you to follow the popular current; if you are determined to exhibit the last excess of madness and wretchedness, and to be guilty of the most daring and atrocious deed of self-destruction which it is possible for a creature to perpetrate; if such

be the incurable fatality of your nature, the invincible hardihood and intractability of your mind, your confirmed regardlessness of every consideration of glory, happiness, and self, and your utter insensibility to the highest claims of tenderness, generosity, and gratitude, then choose the service of idolatry—embark in the basest thralldom to which Satan can degrade his votaries—be the veriest slaves of your own natural corruptions—the most devoted martyrs to the servitude of that iniquity, whose fruit is shame, and whose wages is death. If you have been smitten with judicial blindness of eyes, and seared hardness of conscience; if the great enemy of souls has, by the potency of his sorceries, and by the brilliancy of his enchantments, so fascinated your minds, and so debauched your hearts, as to make you stumble at every step, and receive erroneous impressions from every object; if, in the science of spiritual arithmetic, you discover such a stultification of intellect, and incapacity of moral discrimination, as to prefer a life fleeting as the shadow, to an existence of infinite duration; if you deem the pampering of the appetites, and the gratification of the propensities of the “vile body,” as of weightier consideration than the improvement of the powers, and the assurance of the well-being of the never-dying spirit; if the most evanescent and unsatisfying of animal indulgences far overbalance, in your estimation, the purest and the sublimest of celestial ecstasies; if flames and torments unutterable have deeper charms for you than triumphs and transports inconceivable; if you wish to be the “greatest architect of ruin” that ever existed, the destroyers of the largest amount of righteousness and felicity which the world ever beheld, then declare yourselves at once to be the devotees of ungodliness, and the heirs of wrath. Plunge headlong into every excess of criminality and frenzy; cast away from you the last desire and hope of salvation; pronounce boldly and fearlessly the decision, that you have “judged yourselves unworthy of everlasting life;” and say in a spirit betraying an equal defiance of the thunders of divine judgment, and the

pleadings of divine compassion, "Who is the Lord that we should obey his voice? we know not the Lord, neither will we serve him; for we have loved strangers, and after them will we go."

If you greatly prefer the pleasures and pursuits of a present world; if it have attracted and satisfied your fondest regards; if a predilection for its degrading slavery, its ever fluctuating frivolities, and its ruinous excesses, has become the darling and dominant passion of your soul, then see that you adore no other idol than the world—that its spirit and maxims be identified with all your sentiments, and tastes, and mental operations—and that you permit no other object to interfere with its claims of affection, or to dispute with it the rights of supremacy. See, that you bow implicitly, and without control, to all its pernicious, demoralizing manners; that you permit its pageants and its pomps, its trappings, and its airy nothings, to intoxicate your imagination, to steal away your senses, and to cultivate a vulgar admiration. Let it be farther proved and proclaimed, by every principle of character, by every syllable of speech, and by every feature of external deportment, that you are the unceremonious and unscrupulous votaries of sin—assuming an unbounded license of folly and vice—making fashion your only law, the flesh your only god, and pleasure your only pursuit.

In "walking in the counsels and in the imagination of your heart," you may, if it so please you, violate with remorseless scorn all the established rules of piety and virtue; you may smile with contemptuous disdain at the maxims of ancient wisdom, at the sobrieties and the godliness of former days. You may applaud and imitate every thing, merely because it is of foreign importation, modish and current, however vicious in principle, and however contaminating in its tendencies. You may also overleap all the ordinary barriers which divine wisdom and grace have erected, to fence in the way of transgressors, to prevent them from precipitating themselves over the verge, into the bottomless abyss that yawns, beneath; and you may deride all

the most solemn warnings and cautions that have been enforced upon you; and you may, with reckless despite, spurn at the most powerful safeguards which reason and revelation, which law and conscience have created, for averting the catastrophe of your endless destruction, and for shutting you up to the enjoyment of everlasting redemption. "Choose you this day," that you will not pause at the commission of any iniquity, however flagrant; that you will not quail for the consequences of any conduct, however irrational or revolting; that you will comply with every invitation to sinful indulgence; and that you will not avoid even the last extremes of delinquency. If the service of darkness and unrighteousness have for your taste the highest attractions, then embark your whole soul's affections in that cause—labour in it zealously, and labour in it incessantly. Let no scruples damp your ardour; let no fears or difficulties cause you to flinch or swerve one hair-breadth from the road that leads to hopeless and inevitable perdition. Let all the combined considerations of prudence and self-interest be awed into silence; all the ties of duty, and all the obligations of generosity, be disclaimed and dissolved; let no eloquence of love, no solicitations of friendship, no menaces of wrath, and no promises of richest mercy have efficacy to move or to melt your hearts. Let neither the terrors of hell alarm nor the hopes of paradise allure you. Let neither the eternal compassions of the Father, the expiring tears and agonies of the Son, nor the expostulations and beseechings of the Spirit of grace, be able to unnerve or soften, or to drive you from the career of folly, self-willfulness, and contumacy, on which you have so boldly entered, and along which you may be advancing with fearful and portentous celerity. If you choose this day to give yourselves up to the thrall of your turbulent passions, and to become the slaves of all ungodliness, then drown every rising conviction, strangle in the birth all boding apprehensions, and all gloomy forecastings of the future. Let the reproofs and the reproaches of the divine word, the rebukes of an outraged law,



the pleadings and the pathos of a still importunate gospel be utterly contemned; and let the tender expostulations of pious relatives, the frequent and urgent admonitions of the ambassadors of Jesus, the appointments and the discipline of a corrective Providence, with all the other appliances and expedients of exuberant grace in all their rich variety, and concentrated union of moral force, fall blank and bluntless on the soul, and be scornfully repelled, even as the surges of the chiding main are indignantly thrown back and churned into spray, on the impregnable ramparts of an iron bound strand.

2. But if you choose, as we trust in God you will, an opposite course; if you prefer, as we pray heaven you may, the service of Jehovah to the service of Satan—the pleasures of holiness to the pleasures of unrighteousness; if the dedication of yourselves to the worship and enjoyment of the Almighty have more attractions for you than devotedness to the vile slavery of the world; if you give a preference to felicities that are unclinging and unperishable, to flashes of momentary hilarity, and to bursts of carnal and obstreperous merriment, then stand not for a moment in fatal hesitation, but range yourselves at once under the standard of the cross, and resign yourselves, without reserve and without condition, to the faith and obedience of the gospel—to the love and service of God, your Saviour and Sanctifier. Be assured, that if vital Christianity be to you any thing, it must be your all in all. If salvation be a pearl, it is one of infinite price, and you must feel it to be your primary duty and superlative interest to sell all, to relinquish fortune, life itself, if required, and the inheritance of a whole material universe, did you possess it, in exchange for a treasure so inestimable—a prize so far above and beyond all calculation. If you are sincerely desirous to have your guilt cancelled, your persons accepted, and your title to the immense and inexhaustible benefits of salvation secured beyond the possibility of alienation, cling with avidity to the divine and all-sufficient righteousness of the Redeemer; and if you are truly solicitous to be the subjects

of a moral transformation; that you may feel God's service to be at once your dignity and delight, apply with fervent assiduity and perseverance to the renovating and purifying fountains, of the spirit of holiness. Let there be no oscillation in your will—no vagueness in your purposes, but be distinguished for the exclusiveness with which you attach yourselves to the cause of religion, on which so many mighty and great interests are depending.

If you desire to be Christians, be so in deed and in truth. God is not to be mocked. Let your intentions be unequivocal, your declarations overt and avowed, your life unambiguous, and your character above all suspicion. Let every feeling, and word, and action, be distinctly indicative of the cause you have espoused, the side for which you have arrayed yourselves, the sanctified society with which you consort, and the illustrious heritage which you have chosen. Let no earthly objects divide and distract your attention from the prosecution of every holy aim, and from the attainment of every moral perfection. Let no solicitations of folly or pleasure allure you from the cross of Jesus, no proffers of reward or recompense from any quarter seduce you to a compromise of principle, breach of engagement, or violation of fidelity. If you have enlisted on the side of the great Mediator, and taken the oath of fealty to his service, then see that you live on terms of intimate and devoted fellowship with him; that there be an endearing interchange of all tender offices and sympathies between you; that you are powerfully attached to his person, to his righteousness, to his laws, and to his people; that he habitually lives in your thoughts, in your confidence, in your affections, in your hopes, and through your entire and undivided being; that you are his true and trusty followers, and that your hearts are fast and faithful to every impression made upon them by his word and by his power, by his Spirit and by his providence. Let it be demonstrative that the Saviour reigns paramount in your souls—that you yield implicit submission to every tittle of his will—

that his character is the model of your perpetual imitation—and that his commandment is the standard of all your holy obedience. Let it be farther apparent, that you bear a close resemblance to Christ in all his moral imitable attributes,—in piety and patience, in meekness and humility, in heavenly-mindedness, and in universal sanctity. If you profess your faith and attachment to the gospel, if you avouch yourselves to be the servants of the living God, then let all the distinctive and discriminating evidences of that illustrious relationship beam forth bright and conspicuous from the inner temple of the mind; let all the characteristics and divine excellences of the renovated man be brought out into warm and vivid manifestation in your history. Shun the very appearance of evil; let sin be dethroned both in your heart and in your life. Abjure all communication with the world, in its spirit and in its pleasures, in its principles and in its practices. “Taste not, touch not, handle not,” the charmed poisoned cup which it mingles and proffers to intoxicate the senses, to bewitch the reason, and to provoke criminal desire. Hold no dallying with its follies, no flirtation with its vanities, make no concession to its demands, but keep a retired and separate walk; maintain towards it a distant and studied reserve. And farther, make no secret of the election you have made, and the interest to which you have sworn inviolable constancy. Hesitate not for an instant to avow your sentiments, to assert the character you are determined to sustain; the affections you are resolved, by the grace of God, to cherish; the exalted motives from which you profess to act; the noble ends you have in view, and the glorious destination on which your ambition is devotedly centred. Let your profession, your principles, and all your actions clearly and unequivocally testify, that you consider you have no intrinsic interest, no inherent or permanent portion, in the riches, honours, or possessions of this earth; that you estimate yourselves in no other capacity than that of short lived strangers, making a precipitate passage through its territories, and hasten-

ing to another and eternal country, to the enjoyment of a fortune, splendid and sublime as are the stars, and enduring as is immortality itself. Let it be therefore distinctly evident, from your whole conversation, appearance, and accoutrements, that you are on a journey; let the sandalled feet, and the girt loins, the lights burning, and the staff in hand, bespeak your character, profession, and pursuit. Let every thing bear attestation to the fact, that you consider you have a work to execute of great difficulty and of infinite importance, on the issue of which the whole burden of the destinies of endless ages is staked, and therefore you cannot permit your attention to be for a moment diverted away from this one grand and all-absorbing business of your existence, or your faculties to be engrossed by an inferior object; that you are the citizens of another world, with high prerogatives, refined tastes, and exquisite moral sensibilities, and cannot therefore stoop to be detained by trifles, or amused with levities, or entertained with vulgar debasing indulgences; but must act up to the dignity of a celestial pedigree, and to the nobility of a divine nature, and must walk, speak, and deport yourselves in every respect, as becomes the heirs of God, the kings of heaven, and the high priests of eternity!

II. We are in the second and last place, briefly to advert to the special time when this option is to be made, and this decision come to.

The text specifies and limits it to the present hour—to this fleeting moment of existence. “Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.” In every relation and condition of human life, we know how much depends on the cultivation of favourable junctions, and the improvement of propitious moments. The greatest revolutions that have taken place, the most splendid victories that have been won, and the most permanent conquests that have been achieved, have all depended upon a judicious estimate and critical application of time. In this point of view, even minutes are of incalculable value, seeing the most important transactions that have illustrated and signalled

the world have hinged upon them. If it be true, what a writer has observed, "that it is possible to live a thousand years in a quarter of an hour," it holds still truer, that a few minutes lost or improved may decide the complexion of our whole destiny for eternity. A single hour devoted to the best purpose may suffice to reverse the entire existence of an immortal spirit, as was exemplified in the case of the dying malefactor who was suspended by the Redeemer's side, and in that of the three thousand souls converted by a few brief sentences spoken by the apostle Peter; while it is a position of equal verity, that ages, even illimitable duration itself, will be altogether ineffectual in neutralizing or remedying the deplorable consequences of talents wasted, privileges abused, precious opportunities frittered away, during the flow of a few winged moments of this mortal existence. You may, therefore, be this very moment within an hour of endless ruin or everlasting salvation. And does not this serve to convince you, that the present time—this very day—this very night—may be the knot or juncture to which the whole issues of your intellectual, spiritual, and interminable being are intrusted; when you may be building a superstructure of dignities and felicities on a scale the most magnificent, or be entailing and perpetuating all the unbearable and aggravated miseries of a violated law and a despised gospel.

"Choose ye this day whom ye will serve," because if you do not now cast yourselves into the arms of divine compassion, repose unlimited faith in the merits and mediation of the Redeemer, and "repent as in dust and ashes," your keeping this vital question in a state of suspension and abeyance can only be the means of multiplying all the difficulties that lie in the way of your salvation, and probably defeating or preventing the accomplishment of it altogether. Procrastination may stave off, but it can do no more than simply stave off, its own immediate crisis. This faltering and demurring can only tend awfully to increase the perils you brave, and the hazards you run, to charm reason and conscience to sleep, to nourish and confirm those habits

of lethargy and carnality on which this reluctance, and even aversion to practical Christianity is grafted. Every day's delay is augmenting the power, and consolidating the dreadful influences, of iniquity over you, entangling you deeper and deeper in the pollutions and snares of the world, in widening the breach between you and God, in piling up fresh materials of offence and condemnation, and in making your case proportionately hopeless and desperate. "Choose you this day whom you will serve," because if you do not now comply with the pacific overtures of redemption, embrace God as your only portion, and his service as your only delight, another offer of life may never be made to you, another opportunity of exercising saving repentance may not again be afforded. Many circumstances may conspire to defeat or frustrate so blessed a consummation—the exceeding deceitfulness of sin, the illusions of a present evil world, the absorbing cares of business, the pomps and amusements of life, severe bodily weakness, mental imbecility or sudden dissolution; and just as you are going on debating the point, wishing to speculate a little longer on the subject, continuing to alternate between what you shall choose and what you shall reject, the door of grace may abruptly close, your last hope may be wrested from you, and your doom sealed for ever. In fine, "Choose you this day whom you will serve," because time is rushing to its conclusion with every man and woman of this generation, with ominous and precipitate speed; and when the curtain of death falls upon you—and it falls often suddenly, and generally when least expected, and on those who are worst prepared for it—it will reveal the fallacy and the inefficiency of the whole stock of those subterfuges and shifts, palliations and excuses, which mark in all the unregenerate so strong a disposition to evade and parry off, from Sabbath to Sabbath, and from month to month, and from year to year, the united force of arguments amounting to moral demonstration in favour of immediate faith and moral reformation. On the day of solemn reckoning and retribution, will

it not be an aggravating feature in the guilt of many, that they were ever forming vague and undefined plans of amendment, but never carried them into effect; that they were ever making magnanimous resolves, but never executing them; ever on the point of joining themselves to the Lord, and yet consuming their whole existence in worshipping and doing sacrifice to the idols of time; and will not the severest doom be reserved for "those slothful and undutiful servants," who knew their Master's will, but did it not; "who, when required to go and work in the vineyard, said, We go, but went not?"

Seeing, then, that there is equal hazard and criminality in every moment's delay, in a business so critical and so momentous as the restoration of the soul to God's favour and image, and the insurance of its eternal well-being, we would, with all earnestness, press it upon you as your first, your predominant, and your ultimate interest, to give yourselves to God now, to give yourselves to God wholly, and to give yourselves to God for ever. This is your paramount obligation, your supreme interest, your distinguishing honour. It involves also the only infallible hope of your final salvation. The gospel, while it unfolds a remedial economy admirably adapted to all the diversities of our most necessitous and destitute condition, and is replete with blessings of the first magnitude, and of the richest variety, and which blessings are gratuitously tendered to all, as they were purchased for all, and are needed by all, has nevertheless revealed and bequeathed them to the human race upon the express understanding that they meet with an instantaneous and cordial reception: while no excuse will be sustained, and no apology admitted, on any ground or pretence whatsoever, for hesitation or delay, which, in every case, is held in Scripture equivalent to a disparagement, or actual disclaiming, of the whole generous and gracious proposals. The entire word of inspiration, from beginning to end, is most definite and specific on the point of the present, and that only, being "man's day;" and all its overtures of mercy are

restricted and circumscribed to this revolving, fleeting hour. The gospel language of invitation and promise to sinners is ever couched in the present tense; and it does not hold out one distinct hope or pledge that its calls, if unanswered or disregarded to-day, will be repeated to-morrow, or at any future time. Its voice is never to be heard but in the accents of precipitation and despatch; its messages of love and forgiveness to perishing criminals are all sent by an express, while it exhausts the vocabulary of denouncement and condemnation of every form of parley and truce, of tampering and temporizing. It inculcates, in the most urgent and peremptory tone, "Flee from the coming wrath. Hasten your escape from the stormy wind and tempest. Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain: escape to the mountains, lest thou be consumed. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying, in David, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice. Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day." And while we read of nothing relating to faith, repentance, and salvation, which is not spoken of as critical and hazardous in the extreme, if deferred to some future and indefinite period; and while every menace is levelled, and every admonition is pointed, against faltering and procrastination, every gospel blessing is proffered, every distinction and pre-eminence of salvation is pledged, and will infallibly be conferred upon those who yield compliance with its pressing summons, and who immediately accede to its treasures of grace, which are on a scale of magnitude and glory that transcend all cost and all calculation. "Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope; even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto you. Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God, that he may establish you to-day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto you a God, as he hath said unto you." If you will this day, then, "Choose the Lord to be your God," we proffer to you, in his name and by his authority, that you shall be presently installed in the possession

of all the benefits and immunities of the Redeemer's purchase without deduction and without qualification; that you shall instantaneously emerge from under the dark shadows of the fall, that mighty and mysterious eclipse of humanity, into the effulgence of the light, and the plenitude of the joy, of a renovated, heaven-born nature; and the silent tide of oblivion shall instantly close for ever over all your past and greatest sins; and you shall be immediately admitted within the privileged circle of the redeemed of the Lord, shall have discerned to you the prince of honours, and the meridian of felicities; that your brow shall be encircled with a double diadem of life and righteousness; that a patent to all the titles and the illustrious dignities of the nobility of the heaven of heavens, shall be made out for you, which nothing in time or eternity can alienate or rescind; that paradise shall unlock for you its everlasting gates, and the soul of grace and godliness be poured into your expanded hearts; and you shall behold the interminable future through a vista of brightest hopes, and inherit a name immortal in the records of glory; and while you continue on earth your spirit shall be bathed in a flood of heavenly bliss, and from habitual communion and intercourse with the Godhead, prayer shall swell into praise, praise into adoration, and adoration into rapture!

Awake, then, awake from this delirium and trance. Rouse from this extreme and passive torpidity of soul, and shake off the inexplicable stupor that has fallen upon your spirits. Be alive to the affecting realities of your perilous situation; sit not a moment longer in silent and abstracted musing, but precipitate your escape from impending disaster and death, and hasten this mighty question, so long pending, to an immediate and final adjustment. We do entreat, that all other cares and avocations be for the time suspended, and your whole faculties bent to the furtherance of this one grand concern; we implore, that all other interests, being immeasurably inferior and subordinate, be silent before this overwhelming interest of the soul; we call upon your strenu-

ous and sustained application in contending for the last great stake of life; and we beseech you, if any good feeling and conviction be now at work, that you fan the holy flame, and entirely resign yourselves to the divine impulse; for oh! the course of many of you is now almost run, and your life hangs by a single hair, and the term of grace and opportunity is wearing rapidly away. "Wo unto us, for the day goeth away; for the shadows of the evening are stretched out;" and God only knows what the next hour may develop, and on what new perils each successive morn may break. The sunshine is fast fading away; the storm is brewing, and will quickly burst: every moment's delay may cost a life, and a solitary spark may ignite the train of an endless conflagration. All things have now come to a point. Half measures will no longer suffice; this is the very brunt and crisis of your eternal fate. Now is the ultimatum of gospel remonstrance and solicitation with you. This is the solemn and momentous juncture, when you must secure or lose your everlasting interest in the great redemption; when your answer to the grand question must be clear and categorical, affirmative or negative: for yet another hour and the high game of time is up with you, and the last stake will be played for good or evil, for life or death, for two worlds, of ecstasy or of agony, through the utmost range of an unbounded existence. You have gone too far now to recede. The passes of flight are insuperably barred. You are too deeply and personally implicated in this matter ever to retract. You are shut up, and all your destinies, spiritual and eternal, are concentrated within this narrow verge. Escape is impossible; you are hemmed in on every side, and your last retreat is cut off. Either, then, you must immediately, and on the spot, surrender at discretion to the proposals of amnesty and tenderest clemency; consent to be pardoned and redeemed, to reign in life, to flourish in renown, and to be crowned with endless felicity; or to be condemned as renegades, taken with the weapons of rebellion in their hands, and adjudged to never-ending shame and punishment.

And let the truth be branded into your inmost heart, that at whatever conclusion you arrive in this case, and whether you make your option this day or not, the circumstance will assuredly not prevent the transit of this day into the womb of the past. However lightly you may hold, and however wantonly you may riot away, the successive winged hours of this poor mortal span, the loss of each hour is an important abstraction from the scanty remnant of a most fragile and fugitive life. Your hesitancy and delay will not retard for one moment the sun, which has mounted the heavens this morning, from going down at his appointed time; your dreaming and yawning away of this brief term of grace will not preclude its rushing to its conclusion with equal and portentous speed; even if the very existence and happiness of the whole universe were suspended on the phenomenon, the shadow upon the dial-plate would not go backward this evening by one degree; and were it to be the means of averting the whole catastrophe of your immortal doom, time would not stop for you one wave of its unstaying and resistless tide.

Oh! flee, then, to the sovereign and infallible refuge set before you in the gospel. Avail yourselves of the noble and all-efficient remedy instituted by God for your deliverance from wrath, and restoration to his friendship and moral likeness; improve and apply for your perfect salvation, the admirable and inexhaustible provisions of infinite wisdom and everlasting grace. "And what thou doest do quickly." Put not the question of heaven or hell, bliss or misery, salvation or destruction, one hour longer in quarantine, but bring it to a summary and solemn bearing. Give in, this very instant, your submission to the overtures of reconciliation and peace; expedite your escape to the broad and imperishable Rock of ages, that rears its head aloft, far above the surrounding surges, for the protection and security of exposed, shipwrecked sinners. Return like the dove, after wandering over the face of the earth, seeking rest and finding none, to the ark of your salvation. Throw

yourself into the everlasting and outstretched arms of the once suffering and slain, but now the ascended and life-giving Redeemer, who is beseeching you by all the overflowing compassions he has manifested for you, and by the ten thousand claims which he has established upon your admiration, confidence, and obedience, that ye come to him, that ye may be justified, renovated, and glorified. And let the trumpet of gospel mercy, as it vibrates with thrilling transport through your frame, be cordially and joyfully responded to; and let its tenders of love, and oblivion of all guilt, be more grateful to you, than the proclamation of life to the condemned malefactor on the scaffold; its purifying and refreshing fountains, more welcome than streams in the desert to the parched and prostrate caravan; and the discovery of its splendid heritage of rest and glory, more delightful to your eyes than the sight of harbour to the sea-sick and tempest-beaten mariner!

## A HOLY LIFE IMPORTANT.

I WILL be sure to live well, because the virtuous life of a clergyman is the most powerful eloquence to persuade all that see it to reverence and love, and at least to desire to live like him. And this I will do, because I know we live in an age that hath more need of good examples than precepts. And I beseech that God, who hath honoured me so much as to call me to serve him at his altar, that as by his special grace he hath put into my heart these good desires and resolutions; so he will, by his assisting grace, give me ghostly (spiritual) strength to bring the same to good effect. And I beseech him, that my humble and charitable life may so win upon others, as to bring glory to my Jesus, whom I have this day taken to be my master and governor; and I am so proud of his service, that I will always observe, and obey, and do his will; and always call him, Jesus my master; and I will always condemn my birth, or any title or dignity that can be conferred upon me, when I shall compare them with my title of being a priest, and serving at the altar of Jesus my master.—*Herbert.*

## SERMON XXIII.

### THE DESTINY OF MAN.

BY THE REV. THEOPHILUS LESSEY.

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*"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."—Eccles. xii. 7.*

"God speaketh once, yea, twice, but man regardeth it not," is the language of Elihu. It was true then; it is true now: the voice of God is not listened to by a careless, thoughtless world. He speaks through various means; not only by the instituted ordinances of the sanctuary, and the regular ministration of his holy word; he speaks by the dispensations of his providence. He speaks in the calm and serene dispensations of mercy and love; he speaks in the storm and in the tempest: but how are they disregarded by us! Thoughtless man!

And yet, my brethren, man is not essentially inattentive to future things; it is not characteristic of man to live for the present alone: he is distinguished from the inferior orders of the creation by his attachment to futurity. He is a prospective creature, looking forward, taking a prospective view of what may be supposed to be his situation and circumstances at some remote period. And even with reference to the separation of his mysterious nature in this world, death becomes the subject of arithmetical calculation: almost every thing valuable is insured. Man strives to set up a security against the consequences of his own dissolution; he takes care that all his title-deeds are valid; he takes care to make his will and provide for his posterity, and especially for his posthumous reputation; he links his feelings with remote futurity; he anticipates what the coming generation will think concerning him. He is there going out into the profound of

the future; he is allowing his imagination to expatiate amidst scenes that are distant—and yet neglects his immortal future, and is careless about his deathless spirit.

Certainly this must proceed from a moral cause; it does not proceed from any physical defect. We are not surprised at the improvidence of the brute creation: they live by instinct; they are intended to ruminate on present scenes. Man is distinguished from the brute creation by his capacity for reflection and anticipation: we must, therefore, trace this unaccountable neglect of man to a moral cause. It proves that a calamity has happened to him, that he is a fallen creature; a perverted heart, a depraved mind, have turned him aside; he is not what God created him.

Nothing, my brethren, more certainly, more affectingly proves that man is sold to the captivity of this world than his regard for it, his unconquerable adherence to it. You cannot break him off: no power but the Omnipotence that called him into being can dissolve the chain that binds him to earth—no pestilence walking in darkness, no calamity befalling his species, no distress happening to himself: he is proof against them all. He loses a friend; he indulges in sorrow for a moment or two, and it passes away; he returns from the burial of his friend to his business, and plunges into it with a total indifference to futurity. The whole world is moving all around—he is careless; or, if he is at all alarmed by some fearful manifestation of Divine provi-

dence, it is only the alarm of a brute gazing for a moment; and we may indeed apply to too many the humiliating language which David employs with reference to himself: "So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee." The report of a gun, or some circumstance of danger, will cause the oxen to pause and gaze; they forget it, and they graze again. So it is with man; for a moment he may be agitated and affected, and then he sinks into a lethargy, and remains insensible to eternal things. Oh, how necessary it is that there should be a perpetual voice to remind man of his mortality! God has instituted the Christian ministry; and though that ministry is designed to bring forth evangelical truth, to place it in a clear and conspicuous light, and bring it home to the conscience with fearful and impressive manifestations, yet it is often powerless.

The subject presented by the text is one of a most solemn kind. Some subjects, in order to be understood, must be explained: death requires no explanation; "the living know that they must die." Some subjects, in order to be believed, must be proved, must be argued, must be confirmed: death wants no argument; there it is. Some subjects are not sufficiently interesting to obtain attention; they are interesting to a certain class, not to all classes; they press with peculiar weight on certain individuals—they do not touch others: death, like the atmosphere, presses on all; death is a subject that should come home to every man's bosom and conscience; I must die as certainly as I live—as certainly as you live you must die: a few years will remove this large mass of human beings into eternity. "Then"—I know not when; perhaps the "then" may be very near—perhaps the momentous hour may be approaching—"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return to God who gave it." Oh, may we be assisted in our meditations on this passage! Our thoughts now ruminate on solemn subjects; and I earnestly pray that we may be assisted to disengage our minds from all earthly and trivial concerns!

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The royal preacher here pronounces the destiny of man. Several things are presented to our consideration in the declaration. First, the compound nature of man; he consists of a body and a spirit. Secondly, the resolution of that material body to its original dust. Thirdly, the return of the immortal spirit to its great Creator.

First, we are taught by the text, **THE COMPOUND NATURE OF MAN.** He consists of two very different natures, two very different principles—a mortal body, and an immortal spirit. During this earthly life these two principles are mysteriously united in one; so that man lives as a compound being. He was so formed by the Almighty: we have an account of his creation in brief, but clear and simple language. "So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him." This could not refer to the material part. For God is a pure spirit, and all we know of the essence of God is that he is a spirit; and the spirituality of his nature forms the basis of all those attributes in which he is arrayed: consequently no modification of matter can bear any resemblance to the Divine Being. We must look to something more than matter for the traces and features of Divine resemblance. Therefore we read, "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." God breathed into him the breath of life, that principle in man which constitutes his existence—that principle in man which operates on external organs, and which pervades the material system, his God breathed into him. "There is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." Therefore it is an intellectual life: it is a life capable of thought, volition, and affection. The material part of man, that which meets the eye, is that with which we are best acquainted. Its growth is vegetative; that is, it is preserved in existence by a kind of involuntary means: God's care preserves the creatures he has made.

It would be very delightful to dwell on the wisdom and the goodness of God

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and the structure of the material system, and to show how exactly all the organs in that system are suited to the operations of the indwelling spirit. We cannot have a more delightful manifestation of the benevolence of the Divine Being than in the structure of the human body. But still though so exquisitely formed—as the inspired writer says, “fearfully and wonderfully made”—it is mere matter, which has been combined under the forming hand of Jehovah with exquisite skill. It is impossible to go into an examination of the internal structure, or the external organs of the body, without perceiving that there was a presiding intelligence over the whole; that God knew what kind of spirit he was about to lodge in the habitation. “Every house,” says the apostle, “is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.” The human body is very frequently termed a house, a tabernacle. How do we know that every house is built by some man? Because it displays everywhere the signs of contrivance: there is intelligence and wisdom displayed in the whole. So when we take up the human tabernacle, we see the wisdom of God everywhere manifest in adapting the particular structure of the organ to the operation of that spirit which was to perform its functions through the aid of such organization.

But still we cannot avoid coming to the humiliating thought that it is dust: it is subject to the laws of matter; it may decay by age; it may be injured or destroyed by force; there is no dependence on its continuance; it is frequently out of order; it is perpetually evincing its fragile and transient nature. How frequently are we the painful subjects of those evidences of mortality which surround us, and which exist within us! The seeds of mortality are sown in the soul of this earthly tabernacle; the seeds of mortality are lodged in this dust, beautiful as it may be: they are vegetating, they are growing, they are shooting out in different directions, the fruit is hastening to maturity, that is, death.

Yes, we say that man is dust. This is humiliating: and, if it could be brought home, it certainly would have its due in-

fluence on our minds. All the excellence of man resides in his immortal spirit: there is no abstract excellence in the body; just as there can be no abstract excellence, no abstract intellectual or essential excellence, in any combination of matter. From our association with matter we are in danger of terminating our views with the material system. This is the dangerous tendency to which that class of men are exposed who study physiology: the nature of their research has often led them into materialism; they have denied that there is any spirit in the body; they have altogether lost sight of the lofty and glorious distinction between mind and matter; they have employed their inventive powers to discover other causes for intellectual and moral phenomena than those which the Scriptures direct us to. They have represented man as nothing more than one of the clods of the valley; they have ascribed all the mysterious functions of vitality to the peculiar organization of the material system.

This is very affecting, indeed; because God has so wisely constructed the human system that it is admirably adapted to all the functions of the spirit. It is not the eye which sees; it is not the ear which hears. The organization will remain the same till dissolution, till the putrefaction of this piece of matter takes place; there will be the same exquisitely beautiful formation of the eye, the same adaptation of the ear—the same system through the whole: but there will be no power; the eyes will not see, the ears will not hear. The fallen jaw, the cold marble face, the senseless expression, prove that the vital principle is gone. “Let me bury my dead out of my sight.” It no longer possesses any thing excellent—it is a vile body. Let the rich, and the great, and the noble, remember this. Let us value those things that belong to the eternal spirit; let us value those truths which relate to the inner man.

When the powers of the understanding are sanctified by divine grace, they are ennobled: and even when they are not sanctified they excite our admiration, but with our admiration we mingle pity.

We see a human spirit which employs its intellectual faculties *only* in relation to the present state of things. He has genius of the highest order; he is a poet, he is an orator; he has attracted attention and admiration to himself: but, alas! the blaze of his genius expires in the tomb. His genius is not consecrated at the footstool of the throne of God: those amazing powers which render him a kind of intellectual phenomenon are hastening to set in darkness: and there is an end of him. Some are ready to say—(my brethren, we must not give way to the mere poetical sentimentalism of the day)—that there is nothing about him, bright and brilliant as he may be, that will survive the dissolution of his earthly frame: those powers that are producing such an astonishing effect, those powers that are throwing out the brightness of intellectual discovery, that are applying themselves to the investigation of scientific truth—those powers that are employed in the construction of curious machines—those powers that are so lofty, and striking, and wondrous—will pass away into the darkness of the bottomless pit; and all the dignity and glory, and all the majesty of the intellectual principle sink into the grave, and lower than the grave. I tell you, seriously, that thing in man will survive—that deathless spirit which endears him to God, that which endears him to angels, that which gives him a high and noble dignity.

Yes, there is a spirit in man; and, oh, how noble is that spirit, contemplated apart from the desolating influence of sin—contemplated before it was touched and tainted by the virus of iniquity—contemplated when it shone in the beauty of its original form, when it was prepared by God to reflect his own image, and endued with an understanding that was to expatiate in the opening manifestations of divine truth; an understanding capable of perpetually new combinations of intellectual beauty and glory; an understanding that qualified the favoured being for intercourse with the eternal fountain of life; with powers connected with that understanding—a memory that should be a treasure of all that was excellent and

good—an imagination that should be employed in shadowing forth celestial and spiritual blessedness—a will that should ever be ready to hasten on the errands of God, and attach the individual to the purposes of God—affections, modifications of that will, that should run in perfect harmony with the will of God! Oh, yes, it was a spirit breathed from God; it was God's own offspring: it was a divine emanation; it was a ray from the inexhaustible fountain; it was man formed in the image of God. Oh, how fallen and how inglorious now!

But the glorious gospel of the grace of God repairs the ruined house; it raises up the fallen nature of man; and it gives to the clayey tenement again a happy and immortal spirit. Remember that the best part of man is the deathless spirit. Think of this: you are dust, however clothed in purple and fine linen, however decked in the insignia of dignity and royalty, however separated and distinguished from your fellows—whatever may be your situation in life, however you may disgrace or adorn it—you are dust, you are hastening to the dust. But there is a spirit that will survive that dissolution; and that spirit forms the proper dignity and glory of man.

The royal preacher teaches us THE RESOLUTION OF THIS MATERIAL PART OF MAN INTO ITS ORIGINAL DUST. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." How difficult it is to prevail on man to contemplate his own dissolution! It is a subject studiously avoided; and yet it is to man of all subjects the most solemn, the most solemnly and intensely interesting.

There is no point of view in which man can be contemplated that will give to his spirit admonitory lessons of instruction more powerful, more practical, and more permanent, than the study and contemplation of his dissolution—his departure from this world. This dissolution may be preceded by the infirmities of old age, according to the beautiful description of the royal preacher in the verses preceding the text: "In the day when the keepers of the house shall trem-

ble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened; and the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low; and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird; and all the daughters of music shall be brought low: also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail; because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern: then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

This beautiful imagery may be distributed into three parts: the first is allegorical; the second literal; and the third again is allegorical. The middle verse, "Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high," &c., is certainly literal: it denotes the tremulousness, and the apprehensive character of old age. All firmness is gone; every thing produces a palpitation, a trembling; the individual becomes the subject of highly nervous irritability; there is general weakness and debility; he is sinking into the grave. In the former description there is reference to a frequent simile—a house and its inhabitant. There is a striking distinction between the habitation and the inhabitant. You perceive the exact adaptation of all the imagery to the relation in which the spirit stands to its decaying tenement. And, oh! experience will bear me out: you, my brethren, are witnesses of the decaying nature of your earthly tenement: you already begin to feel the hand of time, the hand of disease, bringing on dissolution. There is dulness in the ear, there is feebleness in the step; there are all the indications that the habitation is about to drop, that this tabernacle of clay is about to sink into its native dust.

But how few live out half their days, even though they are not wicked—I mean

in the common and ordinary signification of the term. But we are told explicitly that "the wicked shall not live out half his days." Visit the regions of silence and death: go and explore the records on the tombstones in the opposite ground: go into any receptacle for the dead, and you will find that death comes on all ages, that death is not to be kept off by any circumstance whatever. No:—parents bury children, perhaps, oftener than children bury their parents. How many just appear, and a blight comes over them, and in the very bud of being they return to dust again! How many just grow up to entwine themselves round the affections of their parents, to be the delight of their eye, the desire of their hearts; and just when they arrive at that age in which friendship is formed, and love is matured, and the parent is already living over again in his child, and the child is enjoying the maturity of the friendship of the parent—death touches the child; he drops, and the parent mourns, and Rachel weeps for her children, because they are not.

I am aware that all this representation may be given you, and yet no effectual impression be made on your minds. Strange to say, that while all men neglect their own mortality, the mortality of the human race is the subject of poetry and eloquent discussion. We have a great deal of sentimental description of this kind. I want you to *feel* that you are obnoxious to the stroke: there is the point. Are you dust? Yes, you know it; you cannot resist the evidence. Your material frame, that is nourished, cheered, warmed, and invigorated by the atmosphere—your material system, that is under the government of material laws—your material system may be deranged and disordered, and the operations of it may be impeded—your material system is dust. You know that: and what is the law? Why, it is to mingle with the dust. Here is a law that cannot be reversed. Your death is as much a part of your physiology as your growth, as your nourishment: you are as certain to return to dust as that you are made of dust. It is vain to attempt to ward off

the stroke. There is a law, "The dust shall return to the earth as it was," a law which has never been interrupted in its course but in two splendid instances, and certainly it will not be interrupted either for you or for me—there is a law that bears us all to the chambers of death.

The dust shall return to the dust as it was. Dissolution may take place suddenly: this has been the case very frequently of late. We question whether the Divine Being has not been intending to produce powerful impressions on our minds by such sudden interpositions. We have had our friends with us one hour, and they have been separated by the veil that conceals eternity the next hour: almost while we have been talking with them they have disappeared.

But I forbear. Elaborate description is out of place. I would never indulge in mere poetical excitement on subjects which are so deeply solemn. You have not only the evidence within you, but around you. Sacred be the feelings of mourners: I would not intrude into the hallowed spot. There is a grief which a stranger must not intermeddle with; there is a grief into which even friendship cannot be admitted; there is a grief too solemn, too sacred, to be approached even by friendship; and kindness itself may be persecuting, may be obtrusive. Many of you—and I cast my thoughts back to the commencement of my ministry here—many of you have had to mourn over friends with whom you have associated, whom you have loved, with whom you have taken sweet counsel. They are not here; they are not in that pew where they used to sit, and meditate, and worship, and pray. They are not with that household, gladdening it by their presence, and guiding it by their wisdom. They are not in that room where you so frequently sat with them. They are not found, for God has taken them. They are turned to dust; the mortal part has been resolved into its original grains of earth, and the spirit has returned to God who gave it.

Let us hasten to take the last view of the subject—**THE RETURN OF THE SPIRIT TO ITS GREAT CREATOR.** There is some-

thing not only solemn, but deeply mysterious in death. We lift our souls to the Great Spirit, to the abstract Spirit, to that Spirit who only has immortality in its strict and absolute signification, to that Spirit who only is absolutely and essentially spirit; our minds are overwhelmed, and we come down, and sink, oppressed with the contemplation of the Infinite Being, till we endeavour to relieve ourselves by the contemplation of created spirits. And when we have gone through all the various orders of spirits, we feel the mystery, as well as the majesty, of the subject.

What is a spirit? Philosophy tells us it is something distinct from matter. Matter can be examined, can be analyzed: matter is known to possess certain positive qualities—solidity, extension, divisibility, and so on. Philosophy will go into the examination of matter, and the laws of matter; and almost the whole encyclopedia of science is confined to the range of material existence. Astronomy expatiates amidst those huge masses of matter that move in solemn and silent pomp over the surface of the beautiful canopy above. There is the region of astronomy, with all its sublime, and all its glorious conceptions; but it is matter, and subject to the laws of matter; for all the movements of those mysterious bodies are regulated by certain laws, which do not touch spirit. And when you have said all you can about the centrifugal and centripetal forces, when you have gone far into the arcana of these wonderful subjects, you have only touched matter; you have not found a single law or principle that touches spirit. You come down; you range over the surface of the earth: and though you may be acquainted with every thing, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall, it is matter—matter vegetated—matter in diversified forms. You come to chemistry; you examine the various minerals, and so on; you go into the bowels of the earth, and explore its various strata; it is still matter. Let us pursue philosophy, and follow it into its deepest recesses, whether lofty or profound; let us go through the

whole range of science—it is material. You take up the mysterious body of man: let it be dissected; let its anatomy be displayed to us, its mysterious structure unfolded—it is only the science of matter.

What is spirit? Tell me. We have treatises on the powers of the human mind; and we are told of perception, of intelligence, of volition, and of the various attributes that distinguish spirit from matter. What is spirit? Nobody can tell. The spirit! *My spirit!* Why, it is the seat of thought; it is the region of intelligence; it is the throne in which all affection is seated; it is the centre whence issues all that renders man agreeable to man. It is there that the Holy Ghost takes up his abode; it is there he pours forth his light; it is there he breathes his influence; it is there he exerts his power. And, my brethren, it is the spirit, after all, that constitutes the man.

I have told you there is something excellent in the material combination even. But what gives to the eye its force, its beaming benevolence, its charming intelligence? What renders the eye the avenue to the mind? What constitutes the eye the opening through which a thousand delightful sensations pass to the mind? What is it that forms the ear to listen to the discourses of wisdom—to the tender, and impassioned, and cheering tones of friendship—to the full melody of music? What renders the heart instinct with kindness, that qualifies the hand to impart charity, or give the expression of friendliness? What animates and nerves the feet? What breathes, and glows, and lives in this portion of dust? It is the spirit; and that spirit shall very soon quit the body. Now, this is death.

We have been told that philosophy, in its attempts to define every thing, has attempted to define death. It is the negation of life, or the privation of life. Why, this is no definition. The term “death” cannot be applied to any thing which has not had life. You never think of applying it to a stone, or any thing that is not animated. So far it is clear and distinct; nothing can die that has

not life; and therefore death, in this sense, is the privation of life. But this is a very meagre definition after all.

What is death? It is the separation of the immortal spirit from the mortal part: it is quitting the lodgment; it is loosening the silver cord; it is opening the door, and letting the inhabitant go out; it is spirit leaving matter, and going to the dust; the spirit is no longer there. The spirit *was* there; precious *was* that spirit in your esteem; beloved *was* that spirit by your spirit; you held with that spirit the most delightful intercourse. But now lift the napkin from the dead man’s face; now gaze on that countenance. It is fixed, it is settled: no blood circulates there; no sensations thrill through those nerves; no soul beams in those eyes: it is matter. You might as well talk to a marble statue: a marble statue may be beautifully chiseled, but it speaks not. You might as well expect some return from the painted picture: the canvass seems to look and breathe; it is matter. So with the dead body; the spirit is gone: and then the question is, Where is it gone? Gone to God: the spirit is returned to God who gave it.

Oh, how full of thought is this representation! The spirit is returned to God, to account to God. It is a responsible spirit: it has to deal with God: God’s eye is upon every step of its progress: God’s ear is listening to every thought, and every word. Oh, my brethren, where shall I find language to express the tremendous responsibility of the soul that is thinking, and feeling, and purposing, and speaking, and acting in reference to that judgment? God will call me to account; and the moment the spirit has quitted the body it passes, perhaps, to a previous judgment. I am not now going into the question of an individual or general judgment: certain it is that the destiny of each spirit is fixed at death, and that this is an anticipation of that eternal destiny. Therefore it is I wish you to conceive of the solemnity of the spirit passing into the immediate presence of God. The spirit returns to God; and then of course all hope of mercy terminates; the probation is at an end. The present is the

probationary state; and, as a probationary state, it is enriched with means of grace. God is employing here all those means which he hath devised to bring our spirits back. "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life."

The whole economy of redemption is a display of God's love to our fallen spirits. God, who hath done all in the way of propitiation, is now doing all in the way of influence; his Spirit strives with men; his holy, his benevolent, his wise Spirit, meets the spirit of man in its downward progress, meets the spirit of man in its course to the bottomless pit, and strives with him, and reasons with him, and debates the matter with him. *Now* is the time for conviction; *now* is the time for contrition; *now* is the time for earnest heart-examination; *now* is the time for prayer; *now* the golden sceptre is extended; the vilest sinner may touch it and be reconciled. The rainbow of mercy appears; and, however dark the storm, the rainbow is there. *Now* is the precious opportunity—I may obtain mercy. This probation-time will make all the difference between hell and heaven—will make all the difference between an eternity without glory, and an eternal profundity of damnation. But when the spirit is gone, it is over with it; it goes to God just as it quits the body.

Do not tell me about any thing in the article of death. Remember, the soul is the seat of sin, and the seat of holiness: the soul has the character; it is not the body—it is not the dissolution of the earthly system that can alter the character of the soul: the soul carries its own character with it. If it has a darkened understanding, a corrupt imagination, a perverted judgment, a rebellious will, and unholy affections, it will go direct to God with all these. Awful! Awful! "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still: he that is unjust, let him be unjust still." It is all over. The sounds of mercy will never break on the wailing, and the yelling, and the gnashing, of the bottomless pit. The mercy of the Lamb will be changed into the wrath of the Lamb!

The olive-branch will never more be held out for the acceptance of the sinner! The soul will go to receive its doom.

But I pause—but I hesitate. I honestly tell you the subject is too affecting. There is the death of the soul, as well as the death of the body. The death of the body implies the absence of consciousness: and why? Because the spirit contains the consciousness. Consciousness cannot reside in the body, and therefore the death of the body implies the absence of consciousness. But the death of the soul does not imply the absence of consciousness. It is not annihilation: no—it is a perpetuity of existence; it is consciousness rendered the source, the element, of unutterable agony. It is consciousness that fixes the eternal destruction of that individual. It is not the absence of feeling: it is the feeling of God's wrath, a feeling of absolute despair, a feeling of all that is horrible in that condition, which is the death of the soul. That soul will live to bear the wrath of the Lamb, to feel the corrosions of the deathless worm—live to endure all that mysterious punishment which is reserved for those that will not have Christ to reign over them. When you gaze on a dead body, think on the departed soul.

But, oh, how consolatory is the thought! If the spirit has been justified, regenerated, and sanctified, it will return to the eternal fruition of God in heaven—return to be for ever happy. It will be a dissolution from that body of corruption which has been a clog, a weight, a hindrance. How little we know of the disembodied spirit! How little do we know of the susceptibilities of the spirit that has emerged from this world! We have often followed in thought the flight of the spirit. But we feel that

"The dead are like the stars by day,  
Withdrawn from mortal eye;  
But, not extinct, they hold their way  
In glory through the sky.  
Spirits from bondage thus set free  
Vanish amidst immensity."

They are in glory, they are with Christ; they are separated for ever from all the temptations and trials of this mortal

scene. The journeying spirit returns; he arrives at home. Yes, after the toil, and peril, and fatigues of his journey—for here he is a pilgrim—after the toil of his journey he enters his Father's house, he takes his seat at the table; universal joy circulates through the happy family:

"Mortals cry, 'A man is dead!'  
Angels sing, 'A child is born!'  
Born into the world above,  
They our happy brother greet,  
Bear him to the throne of love,  
Place him at the Saviour's feet."

Yes, it is the soldier, the hardy veteran, who has endured the fatigues of successive campaigns, who has worn his armour constantly, and used his sword manfully, and kept the shield of his faith steadfastly, and finished his course gloriously. It is the triumphant soldier stepping on the neck of his last enemy, and shouting as he rises, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" He returns to God; he lays by his sword; he takes the victorious palm, and waves it before the throne; he takes off his armour, he unbuckles his breastplate, he removes his helmet, he lays aside his shield: God clothes him with a robe of salvation, and he walks with those who are before the throne.

Yes, it is the weather-beaten mariner: he has endured many hardships, many dangers: now at length he has weathered every storm; he is now entering the port, no more to be dashed on the surface of the troublous ocean, no more to feel the surges beat against him. Angels welcome him; he lands on the shores of immortality to be for ever with Jesus. It is the spirit returning to God.

Oh, my brethren, why do we trifle with eternity? Why will you thus put from you everlasting life? "Then"—"Then!" Oh, there is a mystery in that word! When will it come to me? "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was." Lord, when? God will not tell you when. Very soon, perhaps: perhaps very suddenly. And if I were to look on this congregation, and had I

the right to do it, had I the authority to do it—if I were to summon any one in this congregation who durst do it, to rise and say, before God and this assembly "I am sure I shall not die to-night"—is there one that would do it? Is there one that durst do it? There is not—I am sure there is not: there is not one of all these hundreds, there is not one of all these thousands, that dares say, before God, "I shall not die to-night." Oh, then, may we be prepared! Oh, prepare—(may God speak it home to your hearts!)—prepare to meet thy God! "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

#### AIM AT PROFITING ALL.

I REMEMBER some years ago to have heard a young minister, who was settled in a small obscure town, preach a sermon at an association meeting, which was richly adorned with the graces of finished composition. He was afterwards asked by a senior brother whether he preached such sermons at home; and having answered in the affirmative, "And how many of your people," it was said, "do you think can understand you?" "About five or six," he replied. The avowal produced, as might be expected, among men of piety and experience, a mixed emotion of grief and indignation. Nor can we conceive of a more gross and revolting inconsistency than that of a Christian pastor and teacher pleasing himself, and a few fond admirers, by picking flowers and weaving pretty garlands, when the sheep of his flock are ready to perish for want of being properly watched and fed. What! will a man who has assumed an office of deep and awful responsibility spend his time, his strength, and his ingenuity in courting the muses, and canvassing for literary honours, when the souls of his charge are many of them rushing, unprepared, into eternity! O shameful prostitution of the noblest function! *Con. Mag.* 1826

## SERMON XXIV.

### THE INFLUENCE OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

CHARGE DELIVERED TO THE REV. JOHN REID, OF GLASGOW, ON HIS ORDINATION  
AS A MISSIONARY,

BY THE REV. DR. WARDLAW,  
OF GLASGOW.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

You have this evening been set apart to the most responsible duty which can devolve upon you. We trust the divine presence has been with us now; and, in answer to our united prayers, we hope his blessed presence will be with you. You may well say, as did Moses of old, "If thy presence go not with me, let me not go hence." The work to which you have devoted yourself requires the exertion of all your mental and intellectual, of all your moral and spiritual powers. It is one from which an angel might shrink, and yet one, the duties of which may, through the divine agency, all be performed. You may confidently rest assured that though impotent in yourself, you shall yet be mighty through God.

On such a subject the field is so ample, and the variety so great, that there is some difficulty in fixing. There is one topic, however, very appropriate, and which will, I trust, be in full harmony with the feelings of your own mind—I mean that which is contained in the words of the apostle Paul, when assigning a reason for the zeal and perseverance of himself and his colleagues in the work of the ministry, he says, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that those which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which

died for them, and rose again." (1 Cor. v. 14, 15.)

"THE LOVE OF CHRIST CONSTRAINETH US!" Deeply did this ambassador for Christ feel this motive! To him to live was Christ; and he had no wish to live another hour but as this was the case. His one desire was that Christ might be magnified both in his life and in his death.

What I now wish to impress on your mind is this: THE INDISPENSABLE NECESSITY OF LOVE TO CHRIST IN ORDER TO A FAITHFUL DISCHARGE OF THE DUTIES THAT DEVOLVE UPON YOU. The love of Christ—love to the divine Saviour in all the characters in which the gospel reveals him—love to him for all he is, for all he has done, for all he has promised; this love belongs to every Christian. This is most plainly taught in such passages as these, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: he that loveth his own life more than me is not worthy of me." "Grace be with all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha." The Master whom you serve is pleased with no service but that which springs from love. It is not, however, to this love to Christ, in general, that I would now call your attention, but to *that which is peculiar to the office of the Christian ministry which you have now taken upon you.*



Without love to Christ, all its services are worse than worthless; disgusting as the zealous professions of a hollow friendship, and incongruous as the outward whitening of a sepulchre full of rottenness. This love to Christ is important on a variety of accounts.

I. THIS WILL RENDER STUDY PLEASANT. Your sentiments and habits show that you consider study as necessary to a missionary in India as to a minister in Britain. The great object of study is the word of God; all else is valuable only as it enables you to explain and understand this. Of this word Christ is the chief subject, the sum, and the substance. This is like a golden thread running throughout the whole of revelation. Now, love to Christ will lead you to trace out this thread in all its various parts. Let me not be mistaken: I mean not to recommend that poor, though well-intended mode of interpretation which finds Christ in every page and in every line of Scripture; this argues weakness rather than love. I would allow no rule of interpretation but that which leads to ascertain what is the mind and will of the Spirit, and which will not allow to go beyond it. And especially as a *translator* of the Scriptures into foreign languages this must be borne in mind by you; you must make your translation say what the Spirit of God says in the old language. To preach the truth is to set forth the mind of Christ; and you must have a general and correct acquaintance with the whole, in order that you may properly explain any part. You will do this with delight when you love him whose name has become to your own soul "as ointment poured forth." Wherever the word *does* admit of it, you will be delighted to find Christ; and even the most distant glimpse of him will give any part of it deep interest. The histories, the institutions, the doctrines, the precepts, the promises, the predictions of the word, will all have a zest in proportion as you find them have reference to him; as they speak of his coming, as they explain his truth, as they illustrate his salvation, as they reveal his glory. If you love Jesus Christ, all that relates to him will have a charm: he will be

glorious in your eyes, and you will do all you can to make him glorious in the eyes of others.

I rejoice in the great progress you have made in those literary qualifications which will enable you to interpret the word of God: not that these will do alone; if you would interpret that word with success, you must have this sacred stimulus of love, love to Him whom that word delighteth to honour. The genius of different dispensations, the gradual unfoldings of the divine mind, the relation which one part of truth bears to another, the connexion between the privileges and duties of the gospel, the grand design of the Holy Spirit in the entire communications of his will; all these must be duly regarded, and will become, as it were, a facility to you in translating the Scriptures into any new language. In this department of labour the men of God with whom you are now associated have spent much of their time: in *preparing* the instrument they have met with much success;—may you, my dear young friend, meet with the same success in *using* it!

II. LOVE TO CHRIST WILL ENDEAR TO YOU THE MEMBERS OF HIS FLOCK.—You cannot love Christ without loving his people. All these are the purchase of his agonies, the objects of his dying love, and they are all precious in his sight. He has shown his love to them by the price which he gave for them:—"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." "How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray." Love to Christ will make you earnest in your endeavours to contribute to the joy of the good Shepherd in the recovery of those that are lost. You will constantly bear in mind, that every member of his flock, however lightly esteemed by some, is redeemed, not with "corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but

with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." They are the objects of a love which makes him identify their interests with his own: "Inasmuch as ye did it, or did it not, unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it, or did it not, unto me." If you love Christ, you will fear all indifference to his. And this will exclude all *party spirit*: you will love them, not as partizans, but as Christians, for Christ's sake. The relation of believers to Christ is independent of time and place; and our love to them should be the same in nature, as it is in obligation, in all the world around. How beautifully is this love exemplified in the case of the apostle who once "breathed out threatenings and slaughters" against those who bare the name of Christ! He became as tender in his love as he was eager in his hate. Listen to his language to the Thessalonians;—"We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children; so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God."—"Therefore, we were comforted in your comfort." "We were comforted over you, in all our affliction and distress, by your faith; for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith." And many other portions breathing the same spirit might be quoted.

Let me remind you of the peculiar necessity of cherishing this sacred principle in reference to *those who operate in the same field*. Union is strength: disunion is more than weakness, for it not only checks combined effort, it throws a dangerous stumbling-block in the way. "Let all your things be done in charity:"

be slow to give offence, and slow to take it. Endeavour to have written on your heart the sentiments contained in two inspired passages; the first is in the epistle to the Ephesians:—"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The other is the language of James: "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness and wisdom. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

III. LOVE TO CHRIST WILL CONSTRAIN YOU TO IMITATE HIS EXAMPLE.—You will remember that I have spoken of love to Christ, *for what he is*, as well as for what he has done. Now if you love Christ,—1. You will study to be like him in *general personal character*. Like him in his devotion to God, in his benevolence to men, and in all those holy virtues which adorned his character, and in which he has left us "an example that we should follow his steps." I cannot too deeply impress the vast and unutterable importance of decision and consistency of character to a missionary abroad. I cannot speak aright of the mischief which may be done by inconsistent Christians abroad; but how much more will the mischief be increased if this inconsistency be seen in those who should exhibit all the purity and truth of the gospel! The first Christians exhibited their own conduct as a proof of the divine origin of Christianity. O what a strong hold on the opinions and feelings of men had they who could say,—"For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men,

but God, which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness, God is witness. Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome as the apostles of Christ. *Ye are witnesses and God also*, how holily, and justly, and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: as ye know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory." What men *saw* gave weight to what they heard: the character of the preachers accredited and recommended the truth. With what consistency or success can *he* recommend the truth of God to *others*, who shows that it has no effect upon his own mind? Or how can *he* enforce it, who himself holds it in no practical regard? The heathen may well say, "If such are its effects upon you, what good will it do *us*? Physician, heal thyself!" Hold the truth in love to Christ, and let your resemblance to him be seen. The apostle when writing to Timothy, says, "Let no man despise thy youth;" he does not here mean that you are to assert and maintain your dignity—that you are to make it evident you will not be despised with impunity—that if any *dare* to despise you they shall be made to smart for it:—no, nor would you attempt it. There is no such thing as commanding respect by *insisting* on having it: the way to be respected is to be respectable, the way to be beloved is to be amiable. Those who complain most of want of love among their brethren, are those who repel love by their own behaviour. The sensitive plant of love shrinks back from their rude touch, and then they complain of that very sensibility. The way to have love is not *to* demand it as a right, but draw it forth *by amiable conduct*; and hence, when the apostle says, "Let no man despise thy youth," he fully explains his meaning *by what follows*:—"but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." But if you love Christ,—

2. You will imitate him also *officially*. He loves his people; and he shows that love in the care he takes of them. "Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." Such is the official character of Christ, the "chief Shepherd:" such is his tender care of his followers and people. Let the love of Christ constrain you to go and do likewise.

IV. IF YOU LOVE CHRIST, YOU WILL BE FAITHFUL TO HIM. Attachment secures fidelity. Jesus himself, when he took his important charge upon him, was faithful from a principle of love; and the same may be said of his apostles. If you love Christ, it will influence the great *theme* of your ministry. You will determine "not to know any thing among men, but Christ, and him crucified." Jesus Christ will be the grand sun around which you will delight to make all the lights of truth revolve, and from which they will derive all their glory. Christ will become the very essence of your ministry; the foundation of all its doctrines, the source of all its enjoyments, the spring of all its duties. If you love Christ, you will be faithful also as to the *object* of your ministry. Jesus sought not his own glory, but the honour of his heavenly Father. The apostles sought not their own honour or emolument, but the will and glory of him that sent them: they were actuated in all by love to Christ: "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Christ's sake." The object of Christ, in coming into the world and suffering, was "to seek and to save that which was lost;" and if you love him, you will be anxiously faithful to this object. It is miserable when any other object is preferred or followed.

The salvation of souls was his end in *doing* his work—let it be your end in *publishing* that work; or else, instead of hearing him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant!” you will bring upon yourself a curse, and not a blessing. If you love Christ, you will be faithful also in the *manner* in which you discharge your duty. So it was with Christ himself. Remember his words: “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work.” “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.” He never remitted his zeal, or abated his ardour till his great object was accomplished, till he could look up to his heavenly Father, and say, “I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”

V. LOVE TO CHRIST WILL MAKE SERVICE A PLEASURE, AND HARSHIPS IN IT LIGHT.—All is done *cheerfully* which is done from a principle of love. “I *delight* to do thy will, O God,” said the Saviour. This delight sprang from love, love to his Father, and love to his people; a love which had heights and depths, lengths and breadths unspeakable, and which shall be unspeakable through eternity itself. He knew well what he had to do, the bitterness of the cup he had to drink, the complicated sufferings through which he must pass; yet, he shrank not from his work. Love urged him on, and love sustained him. Amidst all his trials and difficulties he failed not, neither was discouraged, for love still led him on. Let me exhort you then to love him: love will strengthen you for duty, it will sustain you in trial, it will support you in conflict, it will succour you in danger. O what drudgery it is to work where love is not! The galley slave, chained to his oar, is not so pitiable an object as is a minister who works without love to Christ in his heart. Love, on the contrary, exhilarates the heart, it will light up the active eye, it will give elasticity to all the powers, tone to all the purposes, and vigour to all the actions.

Yes, and *it will make hardships light*. Love will induce the Christian mission-

ary to set his face as a flint against all opposition; it will enable him to endure all sufferings—to submit to all deprivations, to make all sacrifices for Christ's sake. You, my dear son, begin by making a sacrifice: you feel it to be no small thing to leave parents and friends and associates. I know what is due to home, and I know well what violence must be done to the feelings. This you have felt; but you hear him who says, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me;” and you say, “Heaven calls, and we must go!” You are aware that difficulties and trials are before you; you have counted the cost; you go forth, not knowing the things that shall befall you, but anticipating evils both physical and moral. I can only speak of those evils as an ear witness; but you have had intercourse with those who have been on the spot, and can tell you of them from their own experience.

Let love to Christ, then, possess your heart. With the living impetus of this love you may go through fire and water. We read of the ancient Christians that they *rejoiced* in being counted “worthy to suffer for the name of Christ;” here is a noble spirit for you! not only patient in suffering, but rejoicing that they were considered worthy to suffer. Emulate the spirit of Paul:—“Behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”—“What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”—“I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I *have* suffered the loss of all things,”—and was he weary? No; “and *do* count them but dung, that I may win Christ.” This is the attainment of love, of steady, ardent, devoted attachment. Seek to be

filled with this, and it will make every yoke easy, every burden light.

VI. IF YOU LOVE CHRIST, YOU WILL VALUE HIS APPROBATION. We cannot bear the averted countenance of those we love. The frown of a friend or a father goes to the inmost soul. If we love Christ, we shall seek his approving smile as our highest reward, and dread his frown as worse than death. If he smile, a frowning universe cannot alarm you; if he frown, the smile of all around will not avail you. "It is a light thing to be judged of man's judgment; for he that judgeth you is the Lord." Not that you are to be indifferent to the opinion of others, for your usefulness depends much on your reputation. The same apostle who thought it "a light thing" to be judged of man's judgment, was very careful to "provide things honest in the sight of all men," and to "have always a conscience void of offence towards God and man." But there must be no *temporizing* for the approbation of men: you must aim in all to please God. Let it be your prominent aim to approve yourself unto him, that at last you may hear that voice sweeter than the music of angels, sound in your ravished ears, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord."

VII. IF YOU LOVE CHRIST, YOU WILL CULTIVATE INTERCOURSE WITH HIM BY FERVENT PRAYER. Our Saviour taught that "men ought always to pray and not to faint;" and this precept he enforced by his own example. But this is not what I now mean. All power is his; all grace is his; in him all fulness dwells. You are to cultivate intercourse with him, and thus to enjoy his smile and embrace his blessing. You will prepare for duty by this: you will consider this, and this alone, the means of your going on prosperously. With him alone is the residue of the Spirit; and without that Spirit no good can be done. The wilderness and the solitary place, instead of being glad for you, will remain an arid waste; and barrenness and desolation will still present itself to your view. When you go forth, look up to him who ascended on high and received gifts for men, that he

would send down the promised showers of his blessing. Then shall you realize the beautiful imagery of the prophet; "you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree." The master whom you serve holds out to you the most ample encouragement. Paul was in affliction, but he had resort to prayer; he "besought the Lord thrice," and he received the animating answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." On that grace you have already expressed your reliance, and you may rest assured that He will never leave you nor forsake you.

Let this love of Christ, then, be your grand motive. Say with Paul, "*The love of Christ constraineth us*; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that those which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." This is a principle which time and place cannot affect; a principle which the missionary may carry with him round the globe, and cherish alike on tropic sands or amidst arctic snows.

And now, my dear son, "I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified!"

Let me now say a word or two to the *hearers*. Our blessed Master, when his heart was melted to pity by the sight of the multitudes scattered "as sheep having no shepherd," said, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few: pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." Do we obey this mandate? Is it our prayer that he may choose suitable instruments—that he may impart to them suitable dispositions—that he will act in all things concerning them as his own infinite wisdom may direct? And after we have thus professed to commit the cause to him, shall we shrink

back if he ventures to come within the limits of our own circle—if he chooses a member of our own family? No! this would surely be unworthy our character.

To the fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, by whom I am surrounded, I need not say there is a struggle on the present occasion, and many circumstances which should call forth your Christian sympathy. This would be the case if our young friend stood alone; but he goes not alone; he takes with him one who has claims on your deepest sympathies. I dare not trust myself to speak further on this point than to say, never were parents more attached to a child, never did child hold parents more dear! But we are called to sacrifice these natural sensibilities at the shrine of the cross.

Our joy on the present occasion should greatly exceed our sorrow: grace should now triumph over nature; and we should account it our highest honour to be able thus to advance the divine glory. My friends, *we are too worldly*. We catch with the greatest eagerness at any situation for our children which may advance their temporal interests. We should be glad to place any of them in the retinue of royalty, or in the train of an ambassador; and instead of shedding tears of sorrow at seeing them quit their native shores, we should exult in the thought of the high honour to which they were advanced. And is it indeed true, that a Christian parent shall feel sorrow when his child has set his heart on becoming a missionary to the heathen? Shall a blush overspread the cheek of such a parent when this is the case? Shall he feel as if something had taken place to which he is indeed constrained to submit, but in which he does not delight? Brethren, these things ought not so to be! Shall a Christian parent have his heart more set on the acquirement of worldly wealth for his children, than on the acquirement of "the unsearchable riches of Christ?" Shall he attach more importance to forming a part of the retinue of an earthly sovereign, than being attached to his service who has the name written on his vesture and on his thigh, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS?" Shall

it be thought a greater honour to be connected with an embassy which has in view the adjustment of certain rights and misunderstandings between earthy states, than a connexion with that embassy which has for its object the establishment of universal peace between heaven and earth? Brethren, the kingdom of Christ is not of this world: how long shall it be ere the subjects of this kingdom act up to their principles, and *show* that they are not of this world—that they do not shun the cross—that they account Christ and him crucified their highest dignity and glory?

Let parents enforce these principles on the hearts of their children. Let the young who are strong in the word of Christ come forward. Let the love of Christ constrain them to live no longer to themselves, but to him. Let us all seek to have Christ as our Saviour; our example in time, our hope in death, our joy in eternity.

May the Lord be with you! May He who holds the winds in his fists, and measures the waters in the hollow of his hands, give you a safe passage over the seas! May he preserve you safe in foreign climes! May he give you many souls to be your joy and crown of rejoicing in the last great day! To that day the connexion of the text leads us; "for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ!" There may you and I, my son, and all that are present, stand accepted in him and enter into his joy! Whether we are again to meet on earth, He alone knows in whose hands are our life and breath! but when you go hence, go in the strength of that passage so full of encouragement, where the Master who says, "Go ye and teach all nations;" adds, "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." The eye that never slumbers or sleeps will watch over you. You cannot go where he is not. His power acts independently of time and place. His purposes cannot be contravened even by the ruthless arm of death. Go, in his name! And though seas may roll between us, and continents sever, we shall still be one in nature and in grace; and when we meet, it shall be in inseparable union and in everlasting peace.

## SERMON XXV.

### NEUTRALITY IN RELIGION IMPOSSIBLE.

BY THE REV. JAMES DIXON.

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*"He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."*  
Matt. xii. 30.

THE evident doctrine of our text, brethren, is this;—that there is no allowed nor authorized religious neutrality:—that every man, in a religious point of view, is *for* Christ the Saviour, or else *against* Christ the Saviour;—and that it is quite impossible to find a *middle* state. The proposition may be stated in other terms, but the meaning is the same. We are all here in a religious station, or we are not. We are all here in the train of the gospel, with all its attendant blessings of light, and communion, and purity, and peace, and hope;—or we are in darkness, misery, impurity,—in an undone, a ruined state. We are either in the state of a religious man, with his sanctified understanding, his submissive will, his renewed heart, his fervent devotion, his tender charity, his glowing zeal; or we are still in a state of darkness, carnal, sold under sin, having no affection for God, or zeal for his glory. Either we are children of God, and possessed of the rights, and immunities, and expectations of that relation; or else we are aliens from God, outcasts from our Father's house and family. Thus we are either cherishing a principle of devotedness to God; or we are cherishing principles of unholiness and sin. And then, we are either *with* Christ, in promoting human happiness, and increasing the sum of piety and religion; or we are *against* Christ, in the way of the happiness of men, stunting the progress of Christianity, and dangerous to society wherever we go.

You will say, this is taking high ground:—my dear brethren, the gospel *does* take high ground; and that *neutral* state, to which so many in our day aspire, is not possible to be attained. We *cannot* be neutral;—for if we are not decided, we are the sport of misery, we are hinderances to the benefit of others, we are a prey to temptation, we are the victims of Satan. And as, in a neutral state, it will be impossible for us to be happy, so in this state it will be impossible for us to be *saved*: for in the last day it will not be enough to be almost Christians, or to be partly saved; we must be found *altogether* on the Lord's side. "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."—I observe,

*First, THAT THOSE WHO ARE NOT WITH CHRIST IN DISCIPLESHIP, AND IN THE PROFESSION OF FAITH, ARE AGAINST CHRIST; AS THE DISCIPLES OF ANOTHER MASTER, AND IN THE DISOBEDIENCE OF UNBELIEF.*

There is a very popular phrase in use among us, and that is, *FREE INQUIRY*;—we all claim for ourselves "*the right of free inquiry*." Now, if by this you mean the right of every person to exercise his opinion in religious matters, uncoerced and unmolested by any human, any civil power; then I should say that every such person has a right to the liberty he claims. If you mean that every man has a right to the use of the Scriptures, unrestricted and unrestrained;—why, I should say that every man has a right to possess that

book which is to be the directory of his faith, and the foundation of all that is right; and that the power which would prevent him from using the Scripture is an antichristian power, opposed to the just and proper rights of man. Or if by free inquiry, or right of judgment, you understand the right of every man to enter into such a portion of the Christian church as seems most proper to him;—then I should say, he certainly has a right to choose that system of church government which he pleases; he has a right to do this as an Englishman and a Christian; and to do it without any coercion or molestation whatever. But does it not mean, sometimes, a right to exercise his own opinion, *independently of ALL authority whatever?* And is it not evident that such a man assumes a right to have a god? And I say that no man has a right to have *any* god whatsoever. The man who worships human intellect is an idolater; and he who bows not to the authority of God is just such a man. Christ says, “He that is not with me is against me:” the text evidently puts in for Christ the claim of regal authority and power. Here two or three questions must be put.

*The extent of the Saviour's authority* must be one of these questions. Examine this in support of the discipleship and obedience of faith which we claim for him. Now, the extent of his authority will depend on his personal character and his personal glory. If our Lord be possessed of absolute divinity and glory; if he claim all the perfections of absolute divinity;—then, I conceive, that divinity must extend itself to every thing belonging to him. For instance,

*It must give to his atonement the claim of efficacy.* It is not merely because our Saviour became incarnate—was born in a manger—assumed an humble character—had not where to lay his head;—it is not because he was “despised and rejected of men”—gave himself up to the malice of his foes—was led from tribunal to tribunal, and charged with iniquity;—it is not because he was led to Calvary, and there drank the bitter cup, and there was crucified on the ignominious tree:—it was not because of any, or because of all these

things, that his death was constituted valuable;—these were but circumstances. But that which rendered the atonement of the Saviour infinitely efficacious and available for a world of sinners, is because that atonement was the atonement of the Son of God. It was the touch of Divinity that rendered it a complete and perfect work. It was the Godhead of the Saviour that rendered the atonement of the Saviour infinitely perfect and infinitely powerful. My brethren, there was an *intrinsic* value and worth in that atonement of the Saviour, because it was performed by a divine person incarnate, independent of all the accidental circumstances, if I may so term them, of his sufferings and death. I think I can illustrate this:—What is it that makes a sovereign worth twenty shillings? Not merely because the head of the reigning sovereign is stamped upon it; not merely because it is ornamented round the edge: no; if I understand rightly,—at least this is my argument,—the sovereign is worth twenty shillings *intrinsically*, though it had no head stamped upon it, though it had no ornament around it,—because it has *gold* in it to this intrinsic value. Brethren; I say the same as to the atonement of our blessed Saviour: his *personal worth* gave a value to all his mediatorial acts, independently of all the circumstances which took place. This idea is highly consolatory: it is consolatory to every sinner, if the atonement possess such value, then there is something to stand against all the sin and uncleanness of which he has been guilty; for, if all the sins which have been, and which will be, committed, were collected together and put upon one person, there would be infinitely more merit in the Saviour than there would be demerit in the sinner, though all this sin rested upon him. Consequently, there is in Christ more merit than there can be demerit in every sinner. This is highly consolatory; the merit of Christ is *infinite*; and if it be infinite, it must be *universal*.

Then, also, *the divinity of the Saviour must extend itself to the kingdom of the Saviour.* And this will render it *stable*—it will make it *powerful*—and it will lead it



to *universal triumph*. I cannot account for the *preservation* and stability of the system of Christianity, except as I see that it rests on the divinity of its author. If its author be divine, and if he have himself lived in its institutions, and if he have stamped his own divinity upon those institutions; why, then, they must be preserved, as well as the system with which they are connected. The system has had to encounter innumerable difficulties; it has been exposed to many an alarming storm; and I attribute its preservation amidst all these storms and difficulties, to the stamp of its own divinity which its author has impressed upon it. And this gives, not only stability, but *efficacy*, to all its institutions. It is intended to enlighten those who are in darkness—to raise those that are dead—to rectify those that are disordered—to purify the unclean—to restore those who are miserable to a state of felicity. And how can you account for the fact that they are thus enlightened, and raised, and blessed, except in the fact, that *the divinity of Christ* lives in these institutions, and gives them these effects:—And how shall we account for the *extension* of religion in the world? It is said that Christ shall have “the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.” Now, how do you expect religion to rise above all false systems, and to see every thing that is opposed to it levelled in the dust? How, except Christ be a divine person, and except his divinity live in his system?—The doctrines of religion, to have any influence, must rest on authority of the highest order; and if they be from God, they will have this authority. And though it is not the fashion, allow me to say that *every man is obliged to be a believer in Christ*; and that he who is not *with Christ* in the exercise and obedience of faith, is *against Christ* in the exercise of disobedience and unbelief.

We must be *with Christ*, as it respects his claims upon us. Now, the question here is, *whether the gospel comes to us in the form of law?* There are various parts in the gospel, it is true: the historical portion is stated in the form of history;

the promissory part is stated in the form of promise; the doctrinal part is stated in the form of doctrine; the preceptive part is stated in the form of precept; and so on. The question is, whether there is any thing *binding* in all this. Now, if an instrument should come into our possession concerning an estate, would not *every part* of that instrument, if it were legally stamped, be binding? There might be *history* in it; as to whether it was purchased, or whether it was the gift of the king, or whether it was the reward of valour or merit. And there might be *description* in it; the various parts of the estate, and in what it consisted, and how it was bounded. And it might speak of *duties*; of duties which the possessor would have to perform, both in reference to the estate itself, and to various persons connected with it. And there might be *privileges* mentioned; its possessor might be a peer of the realm, or be entitled to hold some high office. But whatever parts it might contain, the whole instrument would be *law*, the possessor would not be allowed to make choice of a part; he must take it *all*, with all its particulars and provisions, or he must renounce it altogether. My brethren, we have no real right to make a selection, as it regards our religion; we must receive it, and receive it *entire*, if we would preserve the character of honest men. There is history in the gospel,—the history of the birth, and life, and miracles, and sufferings, and death, and resurrection of Christ; and there is description—a description of all the excellent and important privileges which belong to those who embrace it; and there are doctrines; and there are precepts. But *the whole is law*; and if I neglect to take it as such, I am guilty. If God mark out for me a certain course of duty, and I neglect to walk in it, I am guilty; and if he hold out privileges to me, and I neglect to enjoy them, I am guilty. I am guilty alike of not embracing what is offered, and of not performing what is required; and “he that is not *with Christ* is *against him*.”

You must also examine the nature of the *dispensation under which you live*. It is a question with some, how far this is bind-

ing. When Adam was created, he was created with gigantic powers of mind. When he was placed in paradise, every breeze that fanned him, and every object by which he was surrounded, tended to promote his happiness. Now my argument is this,—that Adam was obliged to render to the Creator a regular and equal service. And what are we? As Christians, we live in the midst of an abundance of means and privileges; and we are bound to see that the state of our experience, and the state of our obedience, agrees with our state as to privilege. What! am I to be no wiser than the heathen! no purer than the heathen! no happier than the heathen? Brethren, I am bound, if I am an honest man, to attain to those higher degrees of experience, of happiness, of obedience, to which I am called by the gospel I profess to have embraced, and the dispensation under which I live. And “he that is not with Christ is against him.” He that is not *with* Christ in the obedience of faith, is *against* Christ in the disobedience of unbelief. I pass on to a

*Second observation.*—THOSE WHO ARE NOT WITH CHRIST IN THE PURPOSE AND DESIGN OF HIS DEATH, ARE AGAINST CHRIST, IN DEFEATING THE PURPOSE AND DESIGN OF HIS DEATH.

The *first* purpose of the death of Christ was, *to make an atonement* for our sins; the *second* was, *to give repentance and pardon* to guilty men; the *third* was, *to make meet for the glory of heaven*. Here it will be necessary to distinguish between the executive and meritorious part of our redemption, and the participation and enjoyment of it. It is certain, that in the *executive* part of our redemption, Christ was alone, and none were with him. There never was, there never will be, another being who could take part in the work of atonement. None can be *with* Christ here: none can be with him in his sufferings, none in his merit. You may take all the obedience of your whole lives, and lay it upon his cross, and you add nothing to the merit of the cross; it is infinite, and admits of no addition. With respect to the value of the atonement, there can be no addition, no co-operation:

it is by grace, by grace only, that you can be saved. Neither can we co-operate in procuring salvation for others. We can no more co-operate with Christ, in saving the souls of men, than we could be with God, in forming the creation. When the eternal mind sketched out the plan of creation, no other mind could co-operate with him, for there was no other mind in existence: it was God's plan, and his alone. When he deigned to create the heavens and the earth, there was no volition of any other will to assist him, for there was no other will to associate. When he determined, in the fulness of his benevolence, to make angels happy, and to make man happy, there was no assistant by him; the benevolence was all his own. And when he marched forth from the silence of his own eternity, and said, “Let there be light,” and “Let there be a firmament,” and “Let the earth bring forth,” and last of all, “Let there be man,” and all came at his bidding; why, there was no person standing by to assist and say, “Yes, let us do so;”—it was all from himself—it was the work of divinity alone. And so as to *redemption*: the wondrous scheme was the scheme of God alone; the profound thought, the amazing plan, was of God, and God alone. When the Saviour gave himself to the mighty task of redeeming us, he stood alone, and “of the people there was none with him.”

Then, it will be asked, how can we be with Christ, as to the purpose of his death? Why, *by enjoyment and participation*. I did not create this earth; but I can live upon it. I did not form the beautiful landscape which stretches around me; but I can survey it, and enjoy its beauties. I did not create the fruits with which the earth abounds; but I can taste their sweetness, and receive nourishment from them. I did not create the atmosphere; but I can breathe and live in it. I did not create the glorious sun; but I can walk in its light. So I did not plan this revelation; but I can profit by its discoveries. I did not work out justification; but I can enter into the state of it. I did not prepare the blessing of adoption; but I can be adopted. I did

not compose the charms of holiness; but I can wear all its beauties. I did not prepare the city which hath foundations; but I can rise to the New Jerusalem. I did not furnish those mansions of bliss, or form those crowns of glory; but, by God's grace and blessing, I can gain an entrance to those mansions, and triumph in that glory. Thus we may be with Christ in partaking of all the blessedness of his redemption; and those who are not thus "*with*" him, in the purpose and design of his death, are "*against*" him, in defeating the purpose and design of his death.

We may be *against* Christ in defeating the purpose of his death, in various ways. First, *By rejecting it altogether*, in a spirit of infidelity. Secondly, *By embracing a system which does not contain any of its grand principles*. Thirdly, *By rejecting it in a way of careless unconcern*. Infidelity rejects the death of Christ altogether; regards it as an idle tale, and turns into ridicule all that Christianity connects with it. Some profess to love a system which is full of morality, but which has nothing to do with the cross. Their system resembles the summers of the North;—there is light enough in the hemisphere, but there is not warmth enough in the sun to clothe the fields with verdure and the trees with plenty:—there is light, but there is also sterility. That system of Christianity which has no cross, no dying Christ in it, may have *light* enough, for aught I know; but it has not in it that *heat* which melts the heart, and causes the profession of Christianity to be verdant, and prolific in all the fruits of grace. Save me from a Christianity that has no cross in it, no bleeding Saviour!

**Thirdly, THOSE WHO ARE NOT WITH CHRIST IN THE AFFECTIONS OF THE HEART, ARE AGAINST HIM IN ITS ENMITIES, AND IN ITS INDIFFERENCE.**

The affection of the heart is an essential, and not an accidental, circumstance in true religion. It is an *accidental* circumstance whether a man be short or tall, white or black, fat or meagre, and so on; but it is *essential* to his being a man that he have an erect form, a human counte-

nance, a judging, thinking mind: without these he is not a man. It is *accidental* whether you belong to one sect, or another; whether you have adopted this creed, or another; whether you have entered this church or another;—but *love is* Christ is not an accidental, it is an *essential*, of Christianity. Men may differ about many things, but they are not Christians if they do not love the Saviour. If a man does not love Christ, he is not a Christian, be he what he may besides; and if he love Christ, he is a Christian, be what he may besides. This is an essential principle: he who has it is a good man, and he who has it not is not a good man.

We may be "*against*" Christ either by *enmity* or by *indifference*. Some are against Christ *positively*.—His name grates harshly upon their ears, and sinks heavily upon their hearts. What! that name which is the joy of the Christian's heart; which lights up his countenance with rapture; which is the ground of his hope of bliss for ever? Is there a being in existence, to whom this name is a source of uneasiness and distress? I fear so; I fear there are many of our species, in whose hearts the very name of Christ rouses up every bad passion. We may be "*against*" Christ *negatively, by indifference*; for coldness of heart is impiety, and stamps the characters of those who are guilty of it as enemies of Christ.

**Finally, THOSE WHO ARE NOT WITH CHRIST IN GATHERING, ARE AGAINST HIM IN SCATTERING ABROAD.**

Those who are not promoting his cause by religion, are scattering it by irreligion. Jesus Christ designed to gather all men to himself; and in this work we may all co-operate. Talents of every order, property, rank, influence, exertion, may all be brought into action here; and when Christianity goes on as it should, you will have talent, and rank, and influence, and exertion, on his side; and all belonging to the church of Christ will be devoted to the promotion of his designs, and the establishment of his universal empire.

But, you will say, how does it appear that, if we are not aiming to *promote* this-

cause, we are *scattering* it abroad! Brethren, there was a time when the greatest adversary this country ever had prepared his armies and his flotilla, and lifted up his hand, and declared that our rights, our property, and all that we had, should become his prey; and that he would feed the avarice and cupidity of his followers in this very city. You remember,—many of you are old enough,—I remember well, that one of the finest pictures that was ever seen was then presented to view. Nearly the whole population of the country declared that it should not be, and stepped with eagerness into the ranks, to prepare themselves for repelling England's foe. Well; but *some* did not do so. What then? Were they *against* England? Yes; they were: they were against her constitution—against her rights—against her comforts—against her privileges—against her happiness—against the interests of her children. And had all been left to them, and had all acted as they did, England had fallen a prey to her haughty foe. Brethren, Christ is engaged against a powerful foe; and those who gather not with him, scatter; and those who do *nothing*, are injuring his cause. *Neutrality here, is opposition.* It is laid upon us all to do something for the honour of our divine Lord. We may not all be able to engage equally, or with the same effect; but we must *all* take our stand, and do *something* for the great cause.

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THE MINISTER'S CHARGE COMPARED TO A SHIP'S CREW.

PASTORS are holy ships, whose curates are the pilots, and eternity the port they must guide them to. If it need so much

art and long experience to sail upon the seas, what knowledge and prudence does it call for, to pass over, happily, the sea of this world, where tempests never cease! Alas! who can think, without sensible grief and bitter tears, that the helm of these vessels, which contain such precious wares as cost no less than the blood of Jesus Christ, should be committed, ordinarily, to men of so little experience, that they are not only ignorant of the tempests, shelves, and banks of this terrible sea, but even have not the strength or industry to guide their own little vessel back to the road! And these inestimable riches are frequently intrusted to those whom they will not trust with a purse of fifteen or twenty pieces. And when the pilots are able, who would not even then lose their courage to see themselves sailing amidst so many hazards, and with so little success? How many stupid ones fall out of the vessel! how many imprudent ones get out to sail apart in shallops! how many desperate ones throw themselves over, and abandon themselves to the fury of the waves! What disquiets, what griefs, and what trouble for the poor pilot! He must run on all sides to reach out his hand to those that fall. He must exhaust his lungs, in trying to call those who flee away. He must even frequently throw himself into the sea, to recover those whom the waves swallow up. If he watch not, the fall of the first will be imputed to him. If he be silent, he will have to answer for the flight of the second. If he fear labour and travail, he will be accused of the other's despair. If, in a word, he want vigilance, strength, and courage, he will be guilty of as many bloodsheds as he lets souls perish.—*Entretiens de l'Abbe Jean, &c.*

## SERMON XXVI.

### THE SACRED ORACLES.

PREACHED WITH REFERENCE TO THE CIRCULATION OF THE SCRIPTURES BY THE  
BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY.

BY THE REV. W. JAY.

*"Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch, the scribe, the son of Neriah: who wrote therein, from the mouth of Jeremiah, all the words of the book which Jehoiakim, king of Judah, had burned in the fire: and there were added likewise to them many like words."—Jer. xxvi. 32.*

"SURELY," says David, "the wrath of man shall praise thee, O Lord." This is, indeed, far from being the natural design and tendency of it. In this sense the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. But his wisdom and power are infinite; and by his overruling providence he causes the expressions of human rage to conduce to the display of his own glory, and thus turn the curse into a blessing. The Bible abounds with instances of this; and a very striking exemplification comes before us this morning. Jeremiah was commanded to write in a roll all the words which had been denounced against Israel and Judah. This he did by means of Baruch, who not only transcribed the roll, but read it in the court of the temple of the Lord, the people standing underneath. Michajah heard him, and related the substance to the princes who were assembled in the scribes' chamber, in the house of the king. They therefore sent for Baruch to read it to them. They heard it with trembling and fear, and agreed to tell the king. The king immediately ordered Jehudi to go and fetch the roll. "Now the king sat in the winter-house in the ninth month; and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it

into the fire that was on the hearth." Vain rage! would this hinder the execution of the threatenings? Nay, it could not prevent the infliction of them. Jeremiah is ordered to take another roll, "after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll which Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, had burned." Nor was this all; the roll, instead of being eventually destroyed or injured, was even *enlarged and improved*. "Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim, king of Judah, had burned in the fire; and there were added besides unto them many like words."

Let us rise from hence to some general reflections, observing,

*First*, The importance of having the word of God committed to writing.

*Secondly*, Taking some views of those who would destroy the Scriptures. And,

*Thirdly*, Showing how many things which seem likely to injure revelation, have even proved its advantage.

Many of you will remember that a year ago, I promised to preach on a Scripture, bearing on the importance of the British

and Foreign Bible Society, the Sabbath immediately preceding the annual meeting. Now this is the very Sabbath; and by divine permission and assistance I shall endeavour to redeem the pledge. None, unless by perverseness of mind, can view this as an act of hostility and controversy, when it is only *the fulfilment of an engagement*, announced when I could have no apprehension from a system containing so much of active opposition to an institution which millions of my fellow countrymen agree to be the glory of the land, and which I consider (for I need not be ashamed of my country) to be the glory of the country in which I live.

"All scripture," says the apostle, "was given by inspiration of God." "Holy men," says Peter, "spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." But says Dr. Watts,

"The prophets' pens succeed their breath,  
To save the holy words from death."

But we have only to do with THE COMMITTING OF THE MIND AND WILL OF GOD TO WRITING. This is important for two purposes. *First,—because the knowledge of them must be preserved and extended.* Without the knowledge of them they cannot be felt, they cannot be acted upon, they cannot become the rule of our conduct, nor the source of our consolation. Therefore says the apostle, "How can they believe on him of whom they have not heard?" Therefore says God, "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." Therefore prays the church, "That thy name may be known on earth, thy saving health among all nations." And, *secondly, because there was no way of preserving and extending this knowledge to be compared to this.* Thus, both with regard to extensiveness and security, Scripture surpasses oral tradition. We all know, in the common affairs of the world, how a thing is altered by repeated relation. There are some persons who never regard *accuracy* at all; others seem incapable of it. Some from lack of memory, and others from fervency of feeling, add circumstances: and it is well known how a single turn will express too much or too little to define pro-

perly the true meaning of a case. It is proverbially said there is no believing one half of what we hear. What should we have known of the history of our own country without written documents? A number of facts may have reached us orally, but then they might have been altered in the lapse of years; and therefore the earliest part in the history of every nation, previous to the acquisition of written records, is always deemed fabulous.

Let me place another illustration before you which comes nearer our subject. All mankind once had a divine revelation. The family of Noah saved from the flood was the original of all the nations of the globe; but this family possessed divine qualifications, and, therefore, as the members spread they carried along with them these discoveries. Hence, long after their dispersion, we find, not only in Judah but in other places, some knowledge of the true God; as we see in the case of Balaam, who came from Mesopotamia. And hence, to this day, there are found in all countries some obscure religious rites. These are not, as some imagine, the result of reason, but they are the remains of revelation, the lingering beams of the sun that has gone down; and, therefore, it is remarkable that, in proportion as you go back and trace the time of its setting, you find these beams more clear and strong. The remains of the original revelation are thus found in the heathen world—not only in some apprehensions which they have of a Supreme Being above them, and of something like a future state, but peculiarly in the article of *sacrifice*, (an institution which is perfectly unaccountable unless we suppose an original appointment,) and also in the division of time by sevens. The observations of the moon would lead people to distinguish times into months, and the observation of the sun would lead them to distinguish it into days and years; but there is no one conceivable thing from which it can be imagined why people divide time by sevens, unless it is the divine institution of the Sabbath.

But now what was derived from this source? Where it was unrecorded it

became more and more indistinct and corrupt. This was natural and unavoidable: but in the family of Abraham, and in the nation of the Jews, it was otherwise. *There* revelation was, after a while, committed to writing: thus it became *fixed* and *certain*; thus appeals could be made to it, and mistakes could be corrected by it. The original copy was kept in the ark of the Lord. Every king of the Jews, when he came to his throne, was commanded to transcribe it for his own use. At every public festival it was brought forth and read in the audience of all the people. This would keep up an acquaintance with it. The pious would of course soon multiply copies, and they would lend or read these transcriptions to their relations, and neighbours, and friends. You see we do not know at present the origin of alphabetical characters. This seems very easy and familiar, to you who use it without reflection; but to those who *think*, and have been accustomed to *account* for things, it has proved so difficult and wonderful, that Gilbert Wakefield has written an essay to prove that it must have been originally a divine communication.

But we have only to do now with *the uses*. Writing has answered a thousand valuable purposes. It has been the resource of friendship—it has been the enlarger of commerce—it has enriched the world with the spoils of time—it has multiplied innumerable the treasures of knowledge: by means of it men have secured and communicated their acquisitions, and made the discoveries and improvements of one age and nation available for those of another. The highest honour that can attach to writing is that by means of it the words of eternal life have come down to us unimpaired. And as Dr. Watts says, in the words we have been singing,

"The bright inheritance of heaven  
Is by the sweet conveyance given."

We shall only add that this blessed instrumentality was completed by the discovery of printing; by which, machinery becoming a substitute for manuscript, where one copy of the Scriptures could

have been obtained from the pen, a hundred or a thousand can be obtained from the press. Thus the sacred volume has become the property of thousands and millions who otherwise must have been devoid of it.

But to pass on to the *second* thing. WHAT THINK YOU OF THOSE WHO WOULD DESTROY THE SCRIPTURES? You seem to shudder at the very proposal: you wonder that any person should be capable of such an action as Jehoiakim, who cut to pieces the divine roll and threw it into the fire. About one hundred and seventy years before Christ, Antiochus caused all the copies of the Jewish Scriptures he could find to be burnt: and three hundred and three years after, Dioclesian, by an edict, ordered all the Scriptures to be committed to the flames; and Eusebius, the historian, tells us he saw large heaps of them burning in the market-place. I knew a man a few years ago, very near Bath, who had a pious wife fond of reading the Scriptures. This offended him; and one day he snatched it from her hand, and thrust it into the fire, and consumed it to ashes. This shocks you: but did you never hear of Voltaire, and Paine, and Taylor, (the devil's chaplain,) and other lampooners and revilers of the Bible, who have, by their deeds, more than betrayed the wishes of their hearts? Men may be restrained from burning the book; but every wicked man on earth, be assured, is an enemy to it. Men make the book their enemy, and then they are enemies to the book, and hate it because it does not prophesy good of them, but evil. Mr. Wilberforce told me that when he called on Carlile in the prison, and took out the Scriptures, he said, "I'll hear nothing from that book. How can you suppose that I can bear that book? For if that book be true, I am miserable."

Let us take *four* views of those who are enemies to the Bible.

The *first* regards the *taste* of those who *deny its authenticity*. Without referring immediately to its doctrines, how much is there in the very writing itself that deserves admiration! What sublimity is there in some passages—what unity in

others—what nature and tenderness in all! I wish I had time to furnish you with specimens, but we have not: you may find enough of them in Simpson's *Plea for Religion*. But let me ask if ever there was a person who could read, without being deeply affected, the narrative of the history of Joseph, of the resurrection of Lazarus, and the farewell of Paul to the elders of Ephesus? Here we are supplied with articles to be derived from no other source. We are led back to periods much earlier than other historians reach. Here we see earth rising out of chaos; we see the earth drowned; we see it renewed and re-peopled. Surely those precious pieces of antiquity which are found in the book of Genesis—who would not wish to admire and preserve them? But the Vandalism of infidelity would fling them all into the fire, and fix our eyes on the darkness and dreariness of two thousand years ago. One would imagine that the description which the Bible gives man of his soul, of his capacity for endless improvement, of his immortality, of his being the peculiar care of Deity, might fall in with his love of greatness: one might suppose that men would *wish* they were true—that they would be sorry to learn they had no higher destination than to eat, and to drink, and to sleep. But no; such is the self-abasement and voluntary degradation of those wretches, that they would strip man of his nobler part, and throw into the flames all that would render it important and glorious, that they might feel in them the brute triumphant, and that they might graze by their brethren in the field, saying, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

Secondly, let us view these men as to their patriotism, or their regard to public good. Now I am authorized to say that the advantages of civilization are principally to be ascribed to the influence of revelation. Wherever the Scriptures have prevailed, they have stemmed the fierceness of the population, and the malice of the multitude, far more than all civil ordinances. What have they not done in purifying and blessing the very spring-head of society—I mean marriage

—in banishing polygamy, and confining divorces only to cases of adultery? How is the wretched being shunned, and detested, and thrown on the very dregs of society, who is only suspected of the abominations, in the practice of which the most admired characters in heathen lands avowedly indulged! What has raised this tone of morals? How has the system itself been changed? Captives and prisoners are now not put to death in cold blood. How they are attended to and provided for! If after a battle a single common soldier now was put to death, or maimed, or sold into slavery, every nation would resound with earnest protestations against such shameful inhumanity. Where now are the bloody gladiatorial rites which furnished such delicious entertainment, not only for the men, but the women in Rome? When we look around us, (blessed be God!) we see asylums for indigence, and disease, and all kinds of wretchedness; *here* for the groping blind—*there* for the deaf and dumb; *here* for helpless orphanism—*there* for wrinkled age. What benevolence was seen in the pagan world? Produce one instance in which the philosophy of Greece or Rome ever established an infirmary or an hospital.

The Bible also describes all social and relative duties, and enforces them by the most awful sanctions. It denounces the wrath of God upon ankind husbands and upon scolding wives—upon negligent parents and upon disobedient children—upon grinding masters and upon unfaithful servants. It damns the prince that becomes a tyrant, and it damns the subject that dares to be a rebel. Thus it provides for the welfare of all in the community; and it is easy to see that if all were to imbibe its spirit, there would be no complaining in our streets; all would be order and subordination; the wilderness and the solitary place would be glad, and the desert would rejoice and blossom as the rose. What can we think of men that would destroy a system that thus conduces in every way to the public weal? When Hume himself was asked whether he thought it better for servants, and children, and tradesmen, and the



common people to believe the Scriptures or to disbelieve them—O, says he, to believe them!

Then let us view the enemies of the Bible, *thirdly*, with regard to *their charity and compassion*. I have not time to prove that this earth is the heir of evil, that man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. The common resources to which men apply in these cases are miserable comforters, and physicians of no value; yea, they *add* to the evil; they are not only vanity, but *exacerbation* of spirit. But in the midst of all this disappointment, all this dismay, all these distresses, Christianity comes in among us to heal the broken heart, and to bind up all their wounds. It comes and says to the afflicted, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." It says to the wretched, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And it has this recommendation—the *recommendation of experience*: there are *thousands* that have made the trial. *There* is one who can say, turning his eyes upward, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul." Another wipes his eyes and says, "Unless thy law had been my delight, my soul had almost dwelt in silence." *Here* is a child returning from the funeral of a father, now buried in the same grave with his mother; he opens the twenty-seventh Psalm, and reads, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." *Here* is a husband dying, and sees his wife and children unprovided for, weeping by him; but he hears a soft voice, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will keep them alive; and let thy widows trust in me." I one day, at Olney, met with a good man who had been long deaf. He said to me, "For more than sixteen years I have not enjoyed the pleasure of hearing a single sermon; but I am looking *forward* and looking *upward* for my comfort:

"There shall I see, and hear, and know,  
All I desired or wished below;  
And every power find sweet employ,  
In that eternal world of joy."

What do you think of the human being—that would take away the Bible, dash this only cup of consolation from the parched lip—that would pull down the only refuge to which the polluted sinner can escape from the storms of life—that would deprive him of a resource to which, by and by, there will be an entire enjoyment, and that gives him the consciousness of present support? What can you think of a man that would do this, while he *knows* that he has nothing to substitute in the room of it, and *knows* that if the thing be a delusion, it is a solace which can be obtained in no other way?

We, therefore, view these men once more *as to their guilt*. This may be fairly determined from their *doom*. *We* do not determine their doom; this has been decided by a Being who knows all things, and who will judge the world in righteousness. He has said, "How can ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation?" "He that believeth not shall be damned." Against which, as unreasonable, the infidel protests, and claims that the criminal be the judge of the law and the judge of the judge. "Oh," say some, "we are not accountable for our belief!" To which we answer that if we are not accountable for our belief, we are accountable for nothing; for all our actions *spring* from belief; and infidelity does not arise from want of *evidence*, but from want of *inclination*. We may judge of the moral disposition of a man from the nature of the things he *opposes*. In proportion as a man is *holy* he is adverse to *sin*: in proportion as a man is *sinful* he is adverse to every thing that is *holy*. Is the Bible, then, not distinguished by holiness? Its promises are holy; its commands are holy; it requires holiness of life and heart. Why do men dislike this book? Why do they love darkness rather than light? Because their deeds are evil. If the aim and the design of the Scriptures be to cleanse us from the filthiness of the flesh, "perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord"—it is easy to determine why a man opposes this: he who destroys the principle of all good actions would destroy, if he could, all good actions themselves; and his disposition

says unto God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways; and cause the Holy One of Israel to cease before us."

As there is nothing, therefore, that implies so much wickedness, so there is nothing that tends to so much wickedness, as the removal of the Scriptures. And this is the design of these men. The door would then be open to all manner of iniquity; and every check and restraint being removed, temptation would be always triumphant. If you think them guilty who would rob a fellow-creature of his wealth, what can you think of those who have robbed their fellow-creatures of the unsearchable riches of Christ? If they are guilty who have ruined their health, or their reputation, or their business, what can we think of those who would poison their minds and would destroy their souls for ever? And *this* is their wish—*this* is their endeavour: and God will give them credit for their design, and judge them according to their works, and according to their *wishes*—for they may be *guilty* without being *successful*. This leads us to notice,

Lastly, **SOME THINGS WHICH SEEM LIKE-  
LY TO INJURE REVELATION, AND WHICH  
YET PROVE ITS ADVANTAGE.**

In this number we first rank the *attacks of the infidel on its divinity*. What has been the consequence of all his opposition? What? Why, zeal in its diffusion; and able articles brought forth in its favour; for inquiry is always friendly to truth, as darkness and concealment are friendly to error.

In this number we place, *secondly, the sufferings of its followers by persecution*. Here we have the testimony of an apostle who suffered as an evil-doer unto bonds; but he says the, "the word of God is not bound." And says he to the Philip-pians, "I would ye should understand, that the things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the further-  
ance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some, indeed, preach Christ even of envy

and strife; and some also of good will: the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds; but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." The periods of suffering have been always the most glorious for Christianity; the brethren have been united and endeared the more to each other; the Spirit of glory and of God has rested upon them; their sufferings have arrested attention and induced sympathy; the witness of their sufferings has been found to be impressed, and they have been led to inspire the principles that would produce such effects. Therefore the blood of the martyrs was always considered the seed of the churches; and the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and grew. Dr. Watts, all poet as he was, said, (and who would not wish to join with him in the choice!)"—"I would rather have been the author of Alleine's Alarm to the unconverted than the writer of Milton's Paradise Lost;" but that was a prison production. What did the enemies of religion get by confining Bunyan so many years in jail at Bedford? There, almost inspired, he wrote those works which will continue to incommode the powers of darkness to the end of the world.

In this number we rank, *thirdly, the divisions and parties that have sprung up among its professors*. These have amazingly alarmed some good men; and in their lamentations they have added terror to grief; they have talked of danger, not remembering that in a thousand cases variety is compatible with unity. The differences which subsist amongst all those who hold the head do not affect the oneness of the church; they are only so many branches which form one tree—so many members which form one body. By these they have always proved stimulations to each other; they have awakened and increased emulation and zeal; and religion has always been upon the whole a gainer by them. Thus the separation

between Paul and Barnabas caused the gospel to flow into opposite channels, when otherwise it would have been confined to one. The same may be observed of the difference between Luther and Calvin, and also between Wesley and Whitfield. Thus new opportunities have been offered for the display of liberality, and candour, and mutual forbearance, which sameness and uniformity would have made not only needless, but impossible. It has been found far more important for Christians to love one another, and to exclaim, "Grace be with all them who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," than to peep together through the same key-hole of opinion. And then the different parts of the Scripture have also, in consequence of these divisions, been peculiarly attended to: one party has argued for the doctrinal part, another the practical, another the disciplinarian; and, in consequence of these, no part has remained unexplored or unheeded.

But I am well aware there are some differences of a more important kind. Truth is one and the same in itself; and, therefore, if men entertain opposite opinions on it, they cannot be all right. I do not believe in the harmlessness of error and heresy; I am persuaded they always affect injuriously, not only the welfare, but the safety, of the individual who is misled by them. But, if we view these things as we now do—if we consider the consequences as they affect Christianity itself—it is obvious that *even these* have been overruled for good—that *even these*, as they have risen up in parties and divisions, have been a salutary check on each other, and that each has prevented the possibility of interpolation and expunction as to the Scriptures. If Trinitarians, for instance, had been disposed to introduce passages favourable to their system, the Arians would have been sure to have discovered them, and exposed them. As, on the other hand, had the Arians endeavoured to suppress any passages favourable to the divinity of God our Saviour, the orthodox would have been sure to have detected them, and to de-claim against them. The same may be said of advocates and opponents in all

cases; they have become an effectual check on each other, and have proved so many vouchers of the integrity of the Scriptures, and of the copies of the Scriptures, and have prevented spoliation and expunction.

There is only one thing more; and that is, *the failings of its members*. It would seem impossible any good should arise from these to the cause of the gospel. We therefore, say, "Woe to the world, because of offences,"—because thereby the way of truth is vainly spoken of; by these the enemies of the Lord are made to blaspheme. And, as to such characters as these, we sometimes wish they would not mingle with our assemblies, or that they would come here and get the benefit which the Bible affords. And yet what is the fact? No thanks to themselves—even these scandals have been overruled for good. These scandals were foretold by the Scriptures; and, therefore, they are pledges of their truth; these have shown that the gospel is divine and almighty—because it can bear to be betrayed from within as well as assaulted from without. The excommunication of these persons has always strikingly shown the purity of the church, and that they cannot bear those that are evil; while the true professors have been led, by these instances, to fear, and tremble, and pray; and ministers have held them up as warnings to others, and have said, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed, lest he fall." Thus the Scripture lives through all; and the very things that seemed likely to destroy or injure it have proved the means of its benefit.

On the ground of this subject, therefore, and in conclusion, by way of improvement, we bring forward *three* admonitions.

The first is, *Be persuaded of the stability to the cause of revelation*. Never let your hearts tremble for the ark of God. Give up your fears—they are unworthy or groundless. The church of Christ is not, *cannot be*, in danger. "Upon this rock," says he, "I will build my church." The unbelief of man shall not make the word of God, says the apostle, of none effect. Men may oppose the Bible, they

may burn the Bible, but they cannot destroy the Scriptures. "Heaven and earth shall pass away," says the Saviour, "but my words shall *not* pass away." "My word," says God, "shall not return unto me void; it *shall* accomplish that which I please, and it *shall* prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." "All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." Thus we read in the Acts, that Herod, the persecutor, died, smitten of the angel, because he gave not God the glory; but it is immediately added, "The word of the Lord grew and multiplied." The waves, my brethren, may roar and dash; but while they beat against a rock, they break only themselves. The devil in our day is deceiving many; but don't you think God is at work too? Has he not all his enemies under his control, and under his subserviency? O yes! The thunders that terrify will purify the air, and showers will fall upon the earth. I have frequently been struck with the resemblance there is between the times and circumstances of Luther, and the day in which we live. He was not opposed only by the papist, but by some of the reformed church, and suffered not only from foes, but from *friends*. Then he was tormented with the *prophetical* party, with their dreamings and forebodings in the name of the Lord. Then there were some who pushed his principles into *Antinomianism*, and turned the grace of God into licentiousness. Then he had to encounter the *Anabaptists*: you will not confound these with the respectable denomination of Christians now living, who only differ from us in the article of baptism; but he had to encounter these levellers, these opposers of civil magistrates, who burned down the houses of the rich, and destroyed the castles of the great. And yet, notwithstanding these oppositions continued, the cause prevailed, and the cause came out of all in triumph. I am persuaded this will be the case *now*. Be not faithless, but believe. God shows his government of the world in those confusions which seem likely to unhinge every

thing; and he shows his care of the church in those perils and difficulties which seem likely to destroy it. He could do without these, but he will do now as he did originally: to display his perfections, he will cause light to flow out of darkness, and beauty out of deformity, and order out of confusion.

*Secondly, Apply Scripture to your own use, and apply it to the purposes for which it has been given.* "Whatever was written aforetime, was written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scripture might have hope." "These things," says the evangelist, "are written, that you may believe on the name of the Son of God, and that, believing, you may have life through his name." You are only trifling with this sacred book, unless you make it the means of leading your feet into the way everlasting. You have seen men destroy the Bible, but the Bible can destroy you, and with the surest of all destructions too. The Bible is the most awful thing you ever met with in your existence; and having come in contact with the Bible, you can never shake off the effect; it can never be removed; no, it will always adhere to you; to eternal ages it will stick to you in the way of remembrance, and in the way of accusation. Yes, "the words which I have spoken," says the Saviour, "will judge you in the last day." To what purpose, therefore, is it, that you *hear*, unless you *receive* the word which is worthy of all acceptance—unless it brings you to the Saviour, to the foot of the Saviour's cross—unless it enables you to give yourselves up to him as poor perishing sinners, knowing in whom you have believed. Oh! embrace its proffers—obey its commands—follow its examples, and suffer them to govern you in your worship, in your lives, in your calling! Bind it about your neck; write it upon the tables of your heart; that when you walk it may lead you, that when you sleep it may keep you, that when you awake it may talk with you. Pursue it—speak highly of it—recommend it to others. And,

*Thirdly, Be concerned for the spread and diffusion of it.* What can you impart to

any of your fellow-creatures equal to the bread and water of eternal life? And you cannot complain of your want of means and encouragement in exertion.

This naturally leads me to take notice of the British and Foreign Bible Society, whose annual meeting we shall presently announce. But to use the words of the late Mr. Hall, on a similar occasion: "A speaker can never be so dissatisfied with any thing he can deliver, as when he attempts to commend an institution which, by its own merits, is so pre-eminently exalted above all eulogium." It is hardly necessary to remark now, that there was a necessity for such a society: all at the first acknowledged the necessity of it with regard to foreign parts; but there were some who denied the necessity of it with regard to the home department, presuming that Bibles were to be found in all, or nearly all, families. But the investigation served to show the awful state of destitution in which thousands here were found. I can only mention now the case of Wales: Bibles in the Welsh language were so scarce that it was no uncommon thing for several families to possess one Bible as their joint stock; and so they used it alternately, by the week or by the month. Mr. Charles, a pious clergyman of the church of England, soon made known their wishes, and provision was made for them; and I well remember his saying, that when the people of Bala learned that the first load of Bibles and Testaments was coming towards the place, a multitude of them went forth to meet the vehicle; and, taking out the horses, they drew it themselves into the market-place, and there, in a few hours, they disposed of all the copies. Some kissed them, some pressed them to their bosoms; the children ran home delighted, and the labourers carried them into the fields in order to read them at their homely meals to refresh their toils.

The reception it met with at first was just that which was to be looked for. It received opposition from the party which is high church in name, but popery in spirit; but even this was overruled for good; the opposition not only purified, but fanned the holy flame; and its oppo-

nents were completely put to flight. As the field was to be the world, no private and sectarian combination could reach the grandeur of the design. Comprehension, therefore, and universal co-operation were required; and these were obtained. By the simplicity of its merits the institution was formed for action and for business, and accordingly, soon the little one became a thousand; and the annual report, which at first consisted of three or four pages, soon became a large octavo volume. The example of the metropolis was followed by the cities, and towns, and villages, through all the land; and other countries soon imitated the example of our own; and auxiliary societies contributed their aid from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

The advantages that resulted it would be needless to enumerate. It did more to harmonize the religious world than any thing had done before or could have done. Nothing had occurred as yet capable of furnishing a ground for all to stand upon who professed themselves to be Christians; and I know of nothing that could have been found by which to gain the good will of all, except that which now struck the minds of a pious few—namely, that as all professed to regard the Bible as the book of God, all could unite without compromising their particular views; unite, not in any ecclesiastical or religious object; but unite only to gain resources for the circulation of the Bible, which was to be dispersed without note or comment. I no more doubt than I do my own existence, that it was God who put this desire into so many hearts—that God who, as the Liturgy of the church of England beautifully expresses it, is "the author of peace and lover of concord"—that God who tells us in his word that one of the seven things which he supremely hates, "is he that soweth discord among brethren."

And what danger, what evil could result from all this? As nothing was to be circulated but the word of God, truth must have been a gainer, and error must have been a loser by such a measure. The parties could not engage in these exertions without benefiting themselves.

Here were statesmen and senators, and the nobles of the land, all drawn forth to proclaim publicly that the BIBLE was the religion of PROTESTANTISM, and to express their attachment to it. And I am fully persuaded that one of the causes of that remarkable movement of a religious nature, which has taken place in so many of the upper ranks in society, was the operation of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Never was there such an aggregate of talent, religious principle, and piety as was then engaged; while millions of prayers on its behalf were constantly offered in private, at the family altar, and in public worship; and when they met, there was the prayer of the heart to Him that seeketh such as worship him in spirit and in truth—Him who accepts the *principle* of devotion where the *formality* may be wanting. If nothing more express could be done at the public meetings, it was owing to the peculiar nature of the society; and there is no society but is limited by some exigency, by some difficulty; it cannot do every thing—it cannot accomplish every thing. It is enough if the Supreme Being looks down and smiles, and says, "She hath done what she could."

There is no doing good without giving rise to some incidental evil: our institution therefore never considered itself perfect. And when we consider the number of its agents—the immensity and distance of its operations—what wonder, if some who had been wishing for its halting, discovered a failure or a mistake? But, when these unfortunately occurred they were always immediately rectified, and pledges given against their recurrence. No society could do more—no reflecting mind could require more. Let those who expect perfection, remember it is the easiest thing in the world to find fault, and object; that censoriousness is not always the best food for humility. According to our Saviour, a man may have a beam in his own eye, while he is endeavouring to pull a mote out of his brother's eye. Those who cry out for perfection will be sure to be judged by no lax rule themselves; every failure in them will be minutely *kenned*, and most

probably magnified. Let others, therefore, (whose motives we feel no disposition to question,) see that all their members are free from all blemishes and errors, and whether they include as co-partners, any, who *in any way*, are enemies to the cross of Christ, or enemies to the Triune God. It is easy to triumph before the fight. Untried institutions can afford to be very liberal in their promises; but we plead for a society, which has borne the burden and heat of the day—that has laboured now for more than an age, exposed to every kind of observation. Let others, at the end of so many years, and after expending so many millions, and after accomplishing so much good at home and abroad—let them show themselves as free from every thing objectionable; and we hope there will be enough found that will bid them Godspeed. Till then, we might say, "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off."

I hope I would not speak uncharitably; I am sure I prayed this morning to be preserved from that spirit; yet I cannot but speak, when that dear and beloved object is misrepresented. I remember to have read of some one who was dumb, that when set upon by robbers, and seeing his father likely to be assassinated, he made an effort and spoke. It is not merely choice that induces us to be advocates; we are *compelled* to be advocates; we are not only misrepresented, but we are attacked by those who differ from us. They may fight with men, without being tempted to take captive silly women. There are some of you who cannot feel as others; some of you are young, and cannot feel as those who witnessed the commencement of the institution. We can look back and remember the *inexpressible* pleasure we experienced, attached as we were to the Scriptures, when we learned that a society was to be established, solely for the purpose of the distribution of the word of the Almighty. We cannot forego our recollection of its formation, of its spread, of its first meeting—of the attendance of all that was wise and good—of the obvious felt presence of Deity—of the hours that seemed

to us like hours of heaven upon earth—hours when the temple of Janus was shut—when there seemed to be all peace, and no discord among religious parties—when each seemed to shout, “Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men”—and when we felt and exclaimed, “Behold how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.”

Who can call all this to mind, when thinking of this institution, and not exclaim, “If I forget *thee* let my right hand forget her cunning, if I prefer not *thee* above my chief joy.” Can we forget the many channels of blessing in which this institution has descended—the number of other societies to which this has given rise!—that the world is indebted to it for one third of the copies of the sacred volume which it now possesses!—that, under the blessing of God, the society has translated the Scriptures into one hundred and sixty-three languages and dialects, in one hundred and fourteen of which it had never appeared before!—that seven millions of copies of the word of God have been diffused through this country and in foreign parts! Oh, my brethren! be not betrayed into an improper spirit and language. Display the meekness of your Master. Excuse what will bear palliation, and forgive what will not. “Bless, and curse not.” Remember that Jesus, when reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. But be not discouraged: your noble cause is going on in the greatness of its strength; thousands and millions are tending it with their heads, and thoughts, and pens, and persons. Be thankful for what has been done, but still set your motto be, go forward. Now, to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour, and glory, and dominion, and power, for ever and ever! Amen!

## THE PULPIT GALLERY.

NO. X.

THE REV. WILLIAM JAY,  
*Minister of Argyle Chapel, Bath.*

Would I describe a preacher such as Paul,  
Were he on earth.....

\* \* \* \* \*

I would express him simple, grave, sincere;  
In doctrine uncorrupt; in language plain,  
And plain in manner; decent, solemn, chaste;  
And natural in gesture. COWPER.

BORN of humble parents, Mr. Jay is a proof, that talent, when directed to a good end, is sure to be crowned with success; and when united with piety, to obtain that fame “which God and good men have consented shall be the reward of those whose published labours have advanced the benefit of mankind.”—Taken from the patriarchal occupation of a shepherd, Mr. Jay left his fleecy charge for the more important care of instructing men in their spiritual duties, and, for upwards of forty years, he has been the firm, eloquent, and consistent preacher of the doctrines of Christianity. His popularity, which was always considerable, is nearly as great now as when he first burst upon the notice of the religious world; a proof that his talents have not been impaired by exertion, nor his usefulness diminished by age.

The appearance of Mr. Jay is by no means prepossessing; his contracted forehead, large eyebrows, and a habit of deep thought, have given to his countenance, when settled in repose, an almost repulsive air; his eye looks out from beneath its covering with a suspicious glance, and seems to read the thoughts of others; but when he begins his discourse, his face becomes animated, his forehead loses its contraction, and his eye beams with unwonted lustre. It is then we may observe, “the mind, the music breathing from the face.” His voice is full, deep, and melodious; and when its rich tones fall on the ear, it is impossible to withdraw the attention, and his power of modulation is such, that the pronunciation of a single sentence often impresses

itself on the memory: yet there is no art visible, no affectation, no desire to produce any thing like a theatrical effect.

His action is, in general, elegant and forcible; sometimes it is, however, too redundant. He seems to despise studied forms and attitudes, and is more desirous to impress the heart than please the eye. As an orator, he is entitled to great praise; Brinsley Sheridan said of him, (and who so capable of forming a correct opinion?) "that he was the most perfectly natural orator he ever heard."

As a preacher, he is excelled by few; there may be, indeed, some, whose eloquence is more commanding, whose grasp of mind is more powerful, whose imaginations are more vigorous; but yet, in all the requisites that constitute a good preacher, few will be able to surpass him. His discourses are regular, without being formal; and eloquent, without being extravagant: his language is always correct and nervous; his fancy is rich, but he seldom gives way to the sallies of the imagination; there is but little of rhetorical flourish in his appeals; his is the eloquence of the heart; the warm and impassioned statements of a man fully convinced of the truths he utters, and earnestly desirous to impress others with a sense of their importance. He succeeds best in the tender and pathetic, and therefore his appeals are generally successful. He knows that the judgment may be often convinced, and yet the heart remain untouched by sympathy; he therefore addresses the feelings, and, through them, the heart, as the more powerful mode of enforcing an attention to truth; but he can ascend to the dignity of argument and expostulation, and lead the judgment captive at his will. It is almost impossible to give a general idea of his preaching; simplicity is, however, its prevailing

characteristic; and in this Mr. Jay wisely imitates the example of the founder of the Christian religion; for Christianity is simple in its structure, its precepts, its doctrines, and its requirements.

Mr. Jay has not been the meteor of the moment, or the comet of the season. On his first entrance into the Christian ministry, his talents attracted universal notice, and he has been able to keep his hold on public favour undiminished to the present time. He did not exhaust himself by his first efforts, nor was he anxious to court popular applause. He wisely withdrew early from the dangerous fascinations of crowded cities, and in retirement has cultivated his talents, increased his knowledge, and matured his experience in divine things. So that his preaching, while it commands attention from the young, is eminently fitted to cheer and support the old.

Mr. Jay has appeared before the public as an essayist, a writer of sermons, and a biographer. He has chosen a subject for his essay, which, though of the greatest importance to the welfare of society, is generally shunned by most preachers—it is marriage; and surely when we consider that the sacred obligations of this holy estate are but little understood, and but seldom enforced from the press or the pulpit, some praise is due to him who ventures to dwell upon a theme calculated at once to arouse the attention and improve the mind. His sermons are distinguished by a rich tone of evangelical piety, a strength of reasoning, depth of thought, and simplicity of language. His short sermons for families will long be held in veneration and esteem. His biographical sketches are what all biography ought to be, a faithful record of those whose lives are portrayed.



## SERMON XXVII.

CHRIST'S INVITATION AND PROMISE TO THE WEARY AND HEAVY LADEN

BY THE REV. CHARLES SIMEON, A.M.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—Matt. xii. 28.

It is thought by many that the gospel is a mere system of doctrines, which may be received without benefit, and rejected without loss. It is no such thing. The gospel—and I wish you all to remember this, for it will give you an insight into the gospel beyond all other things that can be conceived in so short a space—the gospel is a *remedy*—a remedy for the miseries which sin has brought into the world. Man is a sinner, and he is utterly undone; the gospel introduces a Saviour exactly suited to his necessities, and sets that Saviour before us under every figure that can unfold his excellencies, or endear him to our souls.

Under the *Old Testament* our blessed Saviour is shadowed forth as the *brazen serpent*, that healed those who were dying from their wounds—as a *city of refuge*, to which the man-slayer might resort with perfect safety—as a *sacrifice*, which removed the sinner's guilt. Looking into the *New Testament*, you will find there our blessed Lord represents himself as *bread* for the hungry, *drink* for the thirsty, a *physician* for the sick, and, we need mention no more than this, as a kind and hospitable *friend*, who invites to him all that are weary and heavy laden. It is in that view he speaks to you, by my mouth, at this moment; and I wish you to attend to these *three things* :—

- I. The characters invited.
- II. The invitation given.
- III. The promise with which it is enforced.

### I. THE CHARACTERS INVITED.

Under the description of the weary and

the heavy laden we must certainly include, in the first place, *Those who groan under the burdens of the Mosaic law.*

The ceremonial law, as you know, required a great multitude of ritual observances, which, to those who saw not their typical use and tendency, must have appeared frivolous and arbitrary; and even to those who had some insight into their proper meaning they still were an irksome task, an intolerable burden. From this yoke, however, the Messiah was to deliver them. He was to annul the old covenant, with all its ceremonies, and to establish a new covenant in its stead. When, therefore, our Lord declared himself to be the Messiah, he invited to him all who were weary and heavy laden with the Mosaic law, and assured them that the yoke which he would impose upon them was, on the contrary, light and easy. There is, however, a further reference,

### 2. To those who laboured under temporal afflictions.

None are such strangers to the common lot of mankind as not to be subject to many trials and afflictions. In fact, such are the calamitous incidents of life, that very few persons—very few, perhaps, who are here present, and have been joining in the thanksgiving which is offered in our liturgy to God—have been able to utter it, or can utter it at this moment, from their hearts, "We thank thee, O God, for our creation!" "For our creation!"—many would be glad if they had never been born; but more especially when the hand of God presses heavy upon

us, and we feel the weight of multitudinous afflictions, we are ready to hate our very existence, and to choose strangling rather than life. Scarcely a week passes, in this great metropolis, but you hear of persons so bowed down under affliction, of one kind or other, that they destroy their own lives.

Now, it is highly probable that many of those whom our blessed Saviour addressed had drunk deeply of the cup of sorrow, and, for their encouragement, therefore, he promised that, whatever were their trials, whether in mind, body, or estate, if only they would come to him, they should find a relief from them all; or, what would be of equal value, they should have support and comfort under their pressure. And, to every person who is under affliction here before me, I declare, in the name of God, that, if you come to the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall experience a rest which the whole world besides can never give. But doubtless, we must principally understand by this term,

3. *Those who were oppressed with a sense of sin.*

Though all are *sinners*, yet all do not *feel* the weight of sin, because they do not know to what tremendous evils it has brought them. They do not consider the wrath of God. They do not consider—I am almost afraid to utter the word—the damnation of hell. They do not consider, they *will not* consider it. When they begin to be afraid of their ungodly state, and to see what a holy God they have sinned against, and how great and terrible a God he is, then they do begin to tremble, lest his wrath should be poured forth against them, and consume them utterly; and then they have recourse to somewhat of repentance, somewhat of attendance to his ordinances, and by that means obtain, just for a little, an insecure peace to their souls. But, after a very little season, they find, from their backslidings, and their utter incapacities, that this does not satisfy an awakened soul. They find they need something more, and that no outward change of theirs can avail them, for their present peace, and their everlasting happiness.

Now, these subsequent views open their wounds afresh, and make them feel in what a hopeless condition they are, till they have obtained peace through the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then they groan—and who is it that must not groan!—under the weight of indwelling sin, which drew from the mouth and the heart of the holy apostle that acknowledgment, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?” And is there such a person here!—is there one groaning under the burden of sin!—is there one trembling at the view of God’s wrath!—is there one desirous to obtain peace to his soul? That is the very person for whose relief the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, and that is the person whom I am addressing at this very moment, in the name of my Lord and Saviour, “Come unto me, and thou shalt find rest unto thy soul.”

But, in order to enter more fully into the import of our Lord’s address, we must proceed to consider,

II. THE INVITATION GIVEN—“Come unto me.”

Now, by the expression, “Come unto me,” you will immediately see that our Lord does not mean to invite the multitude nearer to himself, for they were already round about him. The meaning of his words was, as he himself explains, Believe in me; or, in other words, Come unto me, in the exercise of faith, and hope and love.

Now, in order that I may set this before you, I would take a great liberty; I would unfold to you our Saviour’s words a though they were addressed immediately by him to you. Instead of saying merely, “Come unto me,” I would say, conceive of our blessed Lord as addressing you thus, whilst I merely paraphrase his words:—“Brethren, to impart rest to you all is the very end for which I came into the world; and I would that every one of you, that seeks rest in me, should come to me at this very moment, and receive it at my hands. Turn not away from me as an impostor. You see me, a poor man, not having where to lay my head; turn not away from me as an impostor, if I tell you that I am the true Messiah—the pe-

son designated in all your prophecies—the person sent to you from the Father at this very moment. Go not to the vanities of this world to seek rest in them; for they can never give it you. It is not to be found in them; it is a gift which none but myself can bestow upon any human being. Farther: Keep not away from me, under an apprehension that you can make satisfaction for your own souls, or that you can cleanse yourselves, by any means, from your iniquities; for you never can have redemption but through my blood, nor can you ever subdue your lusts but by my all-sufficient grace; neither delay to come to me on account of your unworthiness, as if it were necessary to bring some meritorious service as the price of my favour. No; come to me, every one of you, just as you are, with all your sins upon you—with *all your sins upon you*. Do not stop to heal yourselves imperfectly, but come instantly to the physician. Come, and receive all my blessings freely, ‘without money, and without price.’ Come in *faith*, believing that I am able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by me, and believing that I am as *willing* to save as I am able. Come, every one of you, in *faith*. Come, also, in *hope*. Let your expectations be enlarged. ‘Ye are not straitened in me, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.’ Count up all the blessings of time—survey all the glories of eternity—stretch your imagination to the utmost—ask all that eye ever saw, or ear ever heard, or heart ever conceived, and I will not only grant all your requests, but do for you ‘exceedingly abundant above all that ye can ask or even think.’ Open your mouths ever so wide, I pledge myself that I will fill them. Moreover, come in *love*. Be not like persons driven to me by mere necessity, and influenced by nothing but the dread of hell; but contemplate my character as the Son of the living God, who has become incarnate for you, and for the salvation of a ruined world. Meditate on my kindness, too, in leaving the bosom of my Father, in emptying myself of all my glory, in order to take upon me all the guilt of your sins, and to expiate them by my own sacrifice

and obedience unto death. Farther: Strive to comprehend the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths, of my love which passeth knowledge, and let a sense of that love constrain you to walk with me, to depend on me, and to delight also in seeing me.”

Now, this I conceive to be the true import of the words—“Come unto me.” Come in *faith*, believing that I am indeed able and willing to save. Come in *hope*, notwithstanding all that you have ever done amiss, however great it be. Come in *love*, and be driven not by a fear of condemnation, but by a sense of the excellency of my character, and by all the wonders of my love.

My dear brethren, this I affirm to every one who is weary and heavy laden, whatever his burden be, that he is to consider these words as addressed to himself, at this very moment, by the Lord Jesus Christ, as much as any of those who attended his *personal* ministry had it addressed to them. Nay, more, to every individual soul it is addressed, as though it had been personally addressed to him *alone*.

Then let us, my brethren, hear our blessed Lord’s address—for it is *He* who speaks, by the mouth of a poor unworthy preacher—let us hear him, at this moment, saying, “Come unto me.” Hear him with his dying breath upon the cross—behold him bowing his head in death, and, with his dying breath, saying, “Come unto me.” Follow him to his throne of glory, and there behold him stretching out his hands, and saying to you all, “Come unto me.” Let us all go to him, with one accord, with one heart, with one mind, and that without delay! Let us fly to him, every one of us, “as doves to the windows.”

Now, that nothing might be wanting to give efficacy to his invitation, consider,

III. THE PROMISE WITH WHICH IT IS ENFORCED—“And I will give you rest.”

The world are glad to see us in our prosperity, and when we can participate in their pleasures; but, in the day of adversity, when want and trouble come upon us, they are but too apt to lessen their regards, and to grow weary of our com-

plaints. Not so our blessed Lord; his conduct is altogether different. He bids us come to him in the time of trouble. He, instead of turning a deaf ear to our requests, assures every one of us, "I will give you rest." *I will give you rest*: how suitable his promise! What do the weary and heavy laden desire? I will suppose them to be bowed down under *temporal* afflictions; what do they desire, what do they wish for, but something to soothe the anguish of their minds, and something to be a support to their fainting souls? Now, my brethren, the Lord Jesus Christ administers this to every person that comes to him—administers it by the aid of his grace, and by the communication of his Spirit. Are their sorrows altogether *spiritual*? He speaks peace to the wounded conscience, and says, "Be of good cheer, *be of good cheer*, I am thy salvation." O what is it that he hath spoken to the soul! Yes, brethren, he discovers to the wounded soul the sufficiency of his blood to cleanse it from the guilt of sin, and the efficacy of his grace to subdue and mortify our lusts. Yes, he gives to all who wait upon him what nothing in all the universe besides can ever supply—a firm and stable hope of pardon and peace, of holiness and glory. Whatever other blessings should be offered to the soul, they would be all despised in comparison with these. That which I offer you in the Saviour's name this day is bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, and health to the sick. They are exactly suited to your necessities—the very thing that you need.

And now, I ask, can any thing be more precious than this to the believing soul? You see how suitable it is. Mark how precious the word which is used in my text, "I will give rest." This means vastly more than a mere exemption from labour and trial. The true import of it implies refreshment—that kind of refreshment which a strong and sincere belief affords. How sweet is peace to a believing penitent! It is peace that passeth all understanding; it is joy that is unspeakable and glorious. My dear brethren, the communications of his Holy Spirit, which he will impart to the weary and heavy

laden soul, are called in Scripture an earnest of our inheritance. You all know what that earnest is yourselves. The peace which he will give is an earnest, is a foretaste—a blessed foretaste—of the felicity of heaven itself.

But we must extend our thoughts yet farther, even to the rest which remains for the people of God. Now that was, doubtless, most eminently in the Saviour's mind; nor can any thing short of all the glories and felicities of heaven be the portion of those who come to him aright;—never shall you have less than all the glories and felicities of heaven.

I now farther add, that this is a true and faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance. Was there ever one person, from the beginning of the world, who ever came to the Saviour in vain? Was there ever one that did not experience his truth and faithfulness? It is true, many perhaps come to him without experiencing this rest and peace, and all these promises below. But why! They did not come in faith, hope, and love, and have been only impelled by terror, and would never think of the Saviour if it were not for hell. They listen to the suggestions of despondency, and they live under the reigning power of unbelief. No wonder, therefore, that they do not find that rest which their souls desire. But if they only go to him aright, there is no guilt, however great, that shall not be removed from their consciences, nor any earthly trouble which they shall not be able to support with comfort; yea, to rejoice and glory in it. If, under any cloud whatever, they go to the Lord, as the apostle Paul did with the thorn in the flesh, and cry repeatedly and earnestly to him, they shall, like the apostle, be enabled to rejoice in their trials and tribulations, and glory in them. They shall certainly find that the keenest of their sorrows are in fact sources of triumph. You remember what St. Paul says, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." Then I say this to all of you; if you will but go to the Saviour in the way he requires, you shall find all this

rest to your souls—rest in time, and glory in eternity.

Now let me address myself to two or three descriptions of persons.

I fear there are many present who have never felt aright the burden of sin, and who are ready to congratulate themselves upon it. An exemption from *earthly* trouble is a ground of self-congratulation, but not so an exemption from the sorrows of a contrite heart. You remember that it is the broken and the contrite heart which God will not despise; but he will despise every other. We may think that we have no need of this; we may, like the pharisee, boast of our own goodness, and, like the elder brother, refuse to join with the poor penitent. But, if so, like the pharisee, we shall go without pardon, while the publican is accepted; and, like the elder brother, be excluded, while the returning prodigal is filled with peace and joy. Dear brethren, I tell you from Almighty God, that you must sow in tears if ever you would reap in joy: you must go out weeping, bearing precious seed, and then you shall come at last rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you.

But I trust there are some who are seeking rest—some who have begun to pray in secret—some who have smitten on their breasts like the publican, and are crying for mercy. Now, then, if there be such a one here present, let him in particular attend to me. My brother, my afflicted brother, there are two things against which you have to guard—the one is against *self-righteous hopes*, and the other is against *desponding feelings*.

Now, there are many persons who are apt to *despond*. They think their burdens are too heavy to be removed, their guilt too great to be forgiven. But I ask of you, whom it is that our Lord invites? The weary, and the *heavy laden*. Whom does our Lord except? Not one—not one! “Come unto me, *all ye that are weary, and heavy laden*.” I pray God that every one of you, my brethren, may be included in this number. “Come unto me, *all ye that labour, and are heavy laden*,” and whatever be your sins, whatever your burdens, “I will give you rest.”

On the other hand, many are tempted to seek rest in their *duties*, in their *performances*; but remember, I beseech you, my brethren, that it is Christ alone who can give peace to a wounded soul. From him you must receive it as a free, unmerited gift.

And then I would say to the weary and heavy laden soul, only do you draw nigh to Christ in his appointed way, and the Lord and Saviour will draw nigh to you, with all his promised blessings, and he shall pour them in rich abundance into your weary and heavy laden souls.

I trust that, in this assembly, there is a third description of persons—those who have obtained rest, and can set their seals to the truth of what I have said, and can add, “I was a weary and heavy laden sinner, bearing the wrath of God. I came to the Saviour; my burden has fallen off at the foot of the cross, and I have obtained peace to my soul.” O that that may be the state of every one amongst you!

Now to each person I would say, you must remember that this, so far from exempting you from an obligation to watchfulness, should bind you to tenfold diligence in the ways of God. Look at the words immediately following my text, “Come unto me, *all ye that labour and are heavy laden*, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you,” (and then he confirms it again,) “and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” Mark! by this he shows that submission to his holy will, and obedience to his commandments, is as necessary to the rest of the soul as an affiance in his name. You cannot come to him for pardon, and neglect the sanctity of your soul. You cannot have peace in a way of sin; and the finding of peace in the Lord Jesus should bind you to the utmost possible exertion in the ways of holiness.

And then I say, if there be such a one—and I trust there are many—who enjoys the peace of God—I say, my dear brother, let this be your daily care, to take Christ’s yoke upon you, and to conform yourself in all things to his mind and will. Even supposing his yoke were ever so heavy, it would be reasonable

that you should take it upon you, when he has delivered you from the yoke of sin, and all the weight of that yoke which you deserve. But I tell you, and I tell you from sweet experience—I tell you that his yoke is easy, and his burden is light. There is not one of his commandments that is grievous—“his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are paths of peace.” If any of you will come to the Saviour, and walk with him in obedience to his holy will, you shall find that in a dying hour it shall be verified in you—“Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.” Follow the soul into the climes of bliss, and there you shall be found in Abraham’s bosom; yea, in the very bosom of God!

Now I have endeavoured to spread before you, with the utmost possible simplicity, what I conceive to be the entire gospel, having opened it, as it were, in all its parts. I speak as a dying man, looking soon for my own departure; and I speak to you as dying men. I pray God that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ may be poured out upon you, as upon the day of Pentecost; and that you may come to him this day, and believe in him, and experience salvation come home to your souls; that thus you may live in holiness, die in peace, and reign in glory for evermore.

The Lord grant a blessing to every soul amongst you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

#### THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE INCREASES PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY.

It is your privilege to find in your professional duties every thing conducive to your particular salvation. Unlike other men, your very vocation is to prayer, to watchfulness, to heavenly contemplation, and spiritual exertion. It might well be expected, that while we are thus exercised for the benefit of others, it should be beneficial, in a superlative degree, to ourselves; that in teaching others, we should become the wiser ourselves; that in warning others, we

should the more readily take the cautions we give; and that, in commending to them the great interests of their salvation, it should be endeared to our own affections as above all price.

Can we conceive of a more exasperated case of folly and of crime than the reverse of this? A man who, by profession, is denouncing the world, but, in heart, making it the object of his idolatry:—A man who is pressing on others the importance of their redemption, and is knowingly neglecting his own:—A man who ostentatiously avows himself to be the servant of God, but who, in fact and in principle, is only serving himself; and professes to serve God only that he may serve himself the more effectually. O, if demons laugh, if angels tremble, it is at such a sight!—*Reed.*

#### USE SCRIPTURE LANGUAGE.

Hold up your face, my brethren, for the truth and simplicity of the Bible. Be not ashamed of its phraseology. It is the right instrument to handle in the great work of calling a human soul out of darkness into marvellous light. Stand firm and secure on the impregnable principle, that this is the word of God, and that all taste, and imagination, and science must give way before its overbearing authority. Walk in the footsteps of your Saviour, in the twofold office of caring for the diseases of the body, and administering to the wants of the soul; and though you may fail in the former—though the patient may never rise and walk, yet, by the blessing of heaven upon your fervent and effectual endeavours, the latter object may be gained—the soul may be lightened of all its anxieties—the whole burden of its diseases may be swept away—it may be of good cheer, because its sins are forgiven—and the right direction may be impressed upon it which will carry it forward in progress to a happy eternity. Death may not be averted, but death may be disarmed. It may be stripped of its terrors, and instead of a devouring enemy, it may be hailed as a messenger of triumph.—*Dr. Chalmers.*

## SERMON XXVIII.

### FIDELITY TO CHRIST ENFORCED.

PREACHED IN THE RELIEF CHURCH, EDINBURGH,

BY THE REV. ALEXANDER HARVEY.

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*"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."*—Rev. ii. 10.

THE visions unfolded to our contemplation in this book of sacred prophecy, are of the most sublime and captivating description. The curtain which conceals futurity from human inspection is lifted up, and the persecuted apostle, in his lonely banishment, has a magnificent disclosure made to him of what was to be hereafter. The dispensations of Providence, which relate to the church, are minutely unfolded. The trials she would have to encounter, and the sea of tribulation through which she should have to pass before she should enter on her millennial rest, are distinctly foretold. The revelation is not indeed given in plain language, but under the more striking form of hieroglyphical symbols. Like a panoramic exhibition, one scene after another comes in rapid succession into view, and one symbol after another arrests the attention of the astonished apostle, till the revelation is complete; and each scene unveils a portion of the history of the church till she is seen far in futurity completely triumphant over all her inveterate foes. Then the curtain drops. Divine revelation closes. The heavens are shut, never to be opened till the Son of man shall come to judge the world in righteousness. The symbolic writing is not destroyed. It is in our hands. And it becomes us attentively, and in the exercise of fervent prayer, to watch the evolution of events, under the firm conviction that the amazing realities, of which these were but the types, either have been, or shall be unfolded, on the theatre of the world.

The first scene in the vision exhibits the glorified Redeemer arrayed in all the overwhelming splendours of Divine majesty, and walking in the "midst of the seven golden candlesticks." This attitude denotes the minute inspection he takes of his church—the tender care he exercises over her—and the rightful claim he has to the supreme regard of every one of her members. The unrivalled dignity of the Saviour, and his high title to the supreme adorations of men and of angels, are demonstrated by the authority which he possesses over the visible and invisible worlds, the minute knowledge which he has of every circumstance connected with the personal history of the humblest of our race, and the awards of judgment, by which the changeless condition of every order of rational intelligences shall be fixed.

In the epistle to the church in Smyrna he describes himself as the "First and the Last," as he who "was dead and is alive." He assures her members that he was well acquainted with their "works of faith and labours of love"—that he knew the sacrifices they had made for his sake—the violence with which they had been assailed by the emissaries of Satan—the bloody persecution they had endured—and the accumulating trials to which they would yet be exposed. But, instead of shrinking back from the thickening conflict, he encourages them to hold fast their integrity, retain their courage, and dismiss their fears. And he urges them to unflinching steadfastness in the course on which they had entered,

by the assurance of a glorious reward, and a splendid triumph at last. But he conceals from them none of the sufferings they might previously be called to endure. He assures them that, before they could hope to obtain the promised crown, they might expect increased hardships. The bloody sword would remain unsheathed. They might anticipate bonds and imprisonment, torture and death. As individuals, they might be called to seal their testimony with their blood, and as a church, they might expect an extended term of tribulation; but, amid all their sufferings, they were not to darken, by cowardice, their bright hopes for eternity. All their losses and pains will be much more than compensated by the successful issue of the conflict. How glorious to ascend to heaven from the scaffold of death to receive the martyr's crown!

You, my friends, are not exposed to the same severe trials, losses, and sufferings, for the sake of Christ, as the church in Smyrna. But, as the adherents of the "captain of salvation," you must endure hardships as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. While you are in the world you will have to fight the battles of the Lord. The enemies of your souls are still as hostile to the spiritual welfare of the friends of Christ as ever, and as full of malignity against your glorious leader. Circumstances are indeed changed. The world is now more formidable in its smiles than in its frowns, and more destructive by its allurements than by its terrors. And Satan's policy is likewise different. Instead of appearing in all his native deformity to work on your fears, with more cunning he now puts on the garb of an angel of light. Instead of employing his agents to light up the burning pile, and use instruments of torture to appal the followers of the Lamb, and induce them through terror to apostatize, he rather endeavours to gain them over to his cause by flatteries. Still you "wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." And while you maintain

the same conflict, the same inducements to fidelity are held out to you as those which cheered on the confessors of former ages. The promise is still sure—the reward is certain—the prize of immortality is still to be won—and the glorified Saviour is still saying to every one now present, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

These words contain,

I. A solemn exhortation; and,

II. A gracious assurance.

Both of these topics claim our serious attention. And may the Spirit of all grace aid the speaker, and impress his hearers with a deep sense of the vast importance of the subject, that each of us may, during life, with ceaseless aim, seek after glory, honour, and immortality.

I. The SOLEMN EXHORTATION demands our consideration. "Be thou faithful unto death." Fidelity is the duty here enjoined. The meaning of the term is level to the understanding of every one, and therefore does not require any lengthened explanation. It has an obvious reference to the proper and conscientious discharge of every duty which we owe as moral, social, and responsible beings. So long as one incumbent, especially recognised duty is neglected, the claim to entire fidelity is forfeited. And in this unhappy condition every individual of our species is placed. But it is not in this extensive sense that we design to consider it in this discourse; but as descriptive of what the disciples of Christ owe to him as their Saviour and Lord. His claims to their fidelity are unalienable and just in themselves, but recognised to be so by those who assume his name, and solemnly profess their attachment to his person and cause. Viewing the exhortation as delivered by the glorified Redeemer to his followers, we remark,

*1st. That Christians are urged to fidelity in their professions of personal attachment to the Saviour.*—The claims which the Son of God has on the faithful adherence of all his followers are so many and powerful as to defy enumeration. The infinite glories of his divine person—the intrinsic and manifested excellences



of his mediatorial character—and the amazing undertaking which he executed for man's salvation, exhibit him to every believer in a light the most attractive and amiable. It is impossible for one who knows and feels that he has been rescued from impending destruction by the generous interposition of another, to refrain from cherishing towards his benevolent deliverer the most grateful emotions. And surely every sentiment of wonder and glowing attachment must rise to its highest exercise, when the redeemed sinner remembers the unparalleled love and boundless compassion of Jesus to guilty men, and the striking proofs which he gave of these. When our race must have perished for ever had he not interposed, he became their surety. He came forth from the bosom of his Father, where he was venerated and adored by all the heavenly hosts, and appeared on our earth in the "form of a servant." Though he had made the world and all its inhabitants, yet, when he came to it, he found no birth-place but a stable, and no cradle for his infant head but a manger. And he was not ignorant of the reception with which he would meet before he appeared among men. He knew that penury, toil, reproach, and persecution would be his constant attendants—that every obstruction which earth and hell could throw in his way, to impede his benevolent enterprise, must be encountered—that in the execution of his magnificent undertaking he would have to bear the ingratitude of men, and the attacks of devils—the fury of the powers of darkness, and the wrath of offended heaven—that in the fulfilment of his covenant engagement with his Father to save sinners, he must pass through scenes, and sufferings, and conflicts, such as never were before exhibited, nor endured, and never shall be again. The sun suffered a miraculous eclipse to conceal the terrors of the hours during which Jesus hung suspended on the accursed tree. And the signals which announced the victory won, and salvation complete, were the loud voice of the expiring Saviour, exclaiming, "It is finished," rending rocks, supernatural darkness, and a great earthquake. Now, all this was

fully known to the Son of God before he entered on his mediatorial undertaking, or came on the benevolent errand of saving souls from the second death; and yet he willingly came, and pressed forward with a holy impatience to the hottest of the conflict, that he might overthrow, for ever, the enemies of our salvation, and work out for us an eternal deliverance. O! there is a grandeur and sublimity in the love of Jesus, harmoniously blending with all that is winning and attractive, which cannot be correctly appreciated without exciting in the believer a triumph of the most pleasing yet indefinable emotions. In the love of Christ there is every thing which is best fitted to produce love in return. The vastness of its extent—its immeasurable depths—the intenseness of its regards—and the disinterestedness of its sacrifices, are well calculated to make the deepest impression on the soul of every Christian.

Now, my friends, you profess to have appreciated the character, the work, and the excellences of Christ, and to be influenced by love to him. You have avowed your attachment to him in the most solemn and public manner, and you are bound by every consideration of duty and consistency habitually to act under the constraining influence of love to Christ. The pulse of this heavenly affection ought to beat strongly and steadily within you, so long as your heart retains its natural warmth. Your love to Jesus must not blaze like a meteor, but burn like the sun. No combination of external circumstances must quench the pure flame of heavenly affection to the Saviour. Providence may frown, friends may disclaim you, or, like the leaves in autumn, may drop into the grave—health may depart—the languor of disease and the fell grasp of death may paralyze your faculties; but whatever you may have to encounter from the attacks of enemies without, or suffer from within, endeavour never to allow the ardour of your love to cool. So long as it is in vigorous exercise, it will bear you up over every calamity. You will not hesitate to suffer for Him who did so much for you. Seek then to have your love fed with the holy

oil of heavenly influence, that you "may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fullness of God." Then shall you evince the reality and intensity of your affection to your Saviour, and prove your fidelity to him. And as his love to you was not cooled by the indignities he endured, the agonies he suffered, or by the grave in which his sacred body for a while lay entombed; so "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

*2d. The exhortation calls on Christians to be faithful in their adherence to all the doctrines of revelation.*—Correct views of divine truth are essential to the formation of the Christian character. "The truth" is the great instrument which the Holy Spirit employs in regenerating and perfecting believers, and for fitting them for the services and enjoyments of the blessed on high. Divine truth is the lamp of heaven, by which the dark soul is illuminated, and the footsteps of the Christian pilgrim directed in his way to the promised rest. The Bible is the mirror in which the moral deformity of our hearts is most strikingly reflected, and the beauty of holiness most attractively displayed. The doctrines of revelation well understood, and cordially believed, influence every spring of moral action, and give an impulse to right conduct. To insinuate error into the mind is like casting poison into a fountain. The streams which issue from it become pestiferous, and impregnated with death.

It must be of vast importance, then, that you form accurate views of those doctrines which the Spirit of the living God has unfolded, and whose truth he has demonstrated by the most splendid miracles, and by other evidence no less satisfactory. To estimate lightly the worth of any truth taught in the Bible, is to betray an utter want of respect for the

authority of Christ, and of fidelity to his cause. Those who would persuade you that you ought to attach no importance to the articles of your creed, provided you keep strict watch over your conduct, are to be avoided as poisoners of the very springs of moral action. They do every thing in their power to infuse into the soul one of the most certain elements of spiritual death. Their own crude opinion, when once embraced as a practical principle, proves fatal to all correct morality. It is indeed possible for a man of bad principles, occasionally, to do an outwardly good action, but it is impossible that it can be so estimated by the Searcher of hearts. Though thousands of his fellows applaud, the righteous Judge will condemn him. But as a general maxim it holds true, that as a tree is known by its fruits, so are a man's principles by his conduct, and the converse of this statement is equally certain. Be not then indifferent to any one doctrine of revelation. Hold fast the form of sound words which are contained in the oracles of truth; contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. You cannot surrender the smallest portion of divine truth without hazard to your spiritual welfare. And if through ignorance or unbelief you neglect, overlook, or abandon any of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, the consequences may be awfully fatal. You must not shape your religious principles by the prevailing opinions of the world, but by the word of God. To give up in complacency to the enemies of Christianity, or in courtesy to the spurious liberality of the age, any of the doctrines of the gospel, is to prove a traitor to Christ. You must be decided in your adherence to every truth contained in the Bible, and determined to hold it fast though you should stand alone. Consistency, safety, and fidelity require this of you—you must never be ashamed even of those doctrines against which the wit of the scoffer, the reasonings of the rationalist, and the contempt of the profane are most bitterly directed. You must take your stand at the foot of the cross, grasp it as the standard around which you most valiantly fight, and take

as your war-cry the words of inspiration, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

The text calls on Christians,

3d. *To be faithful in maintaining the royal authority of the Saviour, and his Headship over his church.*—Jesus was foretold by the prophet as a priest on his throne, intimating very forcibly that he would unite in himself the offices of a king and of a priest; that while he would come in all the meekness of a lamb to be slain, and in all the compassion of our great High Priest, to offer up himself a sacrifice, and to bear the infirmities of his people, he would come likewise in all the majesty and authority of a king to legislate for his church, and to throw over her the shield of his own omnipotent protection. These laws are contained in the Bible, which is the only statute book of the church. They are plain, perfect, and easily understood. They are of universal obligation, and bind as firmly the greatest monarch on earth as the lowliest individual. Every man is commanded to study them for himself, and to judge for himself. The commands—prove all things—hold fast that which is good—let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind—are addressed indiscriminately to all to whom revelation comes. No man, no class of men—no counsel, assembly, or parliament—can, without daring arrogance, issue an authoritative interpretation of any passage of sacred Scripture, and enforce it upon the conscience of another. To your own master you must stand or fall—every one of you must give an account of himself to God. One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.

But though these statements are as reasonable as they are scriptural, they have been sadly overlooked, both by individuals and churches. The authority of Christ has been set aside by human enactments, and the sacred territory of conscience invaded. His own blood-bought church has been torn from under his own almighty protection, and put under the patronage of man, whose breath

is in his nostrils. The wall of fire which the Redeemer has reared around his own Zion, is not deemed sufficient for her safety, but the visible arm of earthly power is sought as a substitute. As the sworn subjects of the Prince of Peace, you are bound to vindicate his insulted honour, and assert the supreme authority of your King. It is treason to Jesus to allow a usurper to enter his sacred province, and dispute with him his authority, or claim a homage which is exclusively his due.

The conduct of all the worthies of former generations loudly calls on you to imitate their heroic example. The cruel threatening of an arbitrary despot—the alluring influence of voluptuous music—the showy pomps of an idolatrous worship—the prostrate knees of sycophantish multitudes—the burning fiery furnace, seven times heated, combining, as they did, all that is alluring on the one hand, and appalling on the other, could not shake the courage of the Hebrew youths, nor secure their ignoble compliance with what they regarded as sinful. Daniel chose to be cast into the lion's den, brave the loss of worldly honour, and encounter the rage of a despotic king, rather than offend his God, and wound his conscience. Reverence for the royal authority of Jesus led many, in former days, to the scaffold and the stake. Scotland, too, has had her martyrs in the same noble cause. Our natal soil has been watered with sainted blood. The individuals who call it their own, and claim kindred with those who resisted every human encroachment on the authority of Christ, and yet tamely surrender their religious liberties, and allow men to legislate for the church, dishonour the cause with which they claim alliance, and are traitors to the Saviour. Whatever, then, it may cost you, maintain the exclusive authority of Christ over his church, and over the consciences of his followers. "Be faithful unto death."

But your loyalty to Christ must not stop here. While you contend for his prerogatives, you must yield yourselves up wholly to his service. He has instituted ordinances to be observed, and

given laws to be obeyed. His authority attaches alike to every one of them. To neglect the one, or disobey the other, is to forfeit all claim to the character of a Christian, and to incur his righteous displeasure. His will must be your rule—his glory your end—his ordinances your delight—his favour your life, and his smile your heaven. Then, when he comes, bringing his reward with him, to give to every man according as his work shall be, he will say of you, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

The exhortation requires you,

*4th. To be faithful in paying your solemn vows.*—Many of you have come under the most solemn obligations to devote yourselves to the service of God. His vows are upon you. They are registered in the book of his remembrance, and you never can deface the record, or recall the sacred transaction. It shall remain indelible till it be exhibited before an assembled universe, and read in the hearing of countless multitudes. Whatever may have been the character of these transactions, whether in the shape of resolutions, promises, subscribing with the hand unto the Lord, or seating yourselves at the communion table, they are for ever binding upon you. Whosoever they may have been made—whether when you were first awakened to see your guilt and danger as a sinner, or when the earthly house of your tabernacle seemed dissolving, and you had the near prospect of becoming an inhabitant of eternity, or when surrounding the sacramental board, with the affecting symbols of a crucified Saviour in your hands, or when your hearts burned within you for benefits received, and mercies enjoyed; it matters not what may have been the time or circumstances in which you vowed to be the Lord's; his claim to your services is unquestionable. You cannot set it aside. You are bound to glorify him in your bodies and your spirits, which are his.

Give up, then, my dear friends, the sins you vowed to forsake—abandon the company you resolved to shun—whatever

sacrifice this may cost you, do not hesitate for one moment to make it—present pleasure, secular advantage, worldly friendships, are less than nothing when put in the balance with the salvation of the soul. Give yourselves cheerfully to the work of the Lord—enter with holy ardour and stern resolution on that course which appeared to you so desirable from a communion table or the borders of eternity; let your language be, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

But if you, in opposition to all your engagements and professions, abandon the Saviour's cause, how dreadful must be your eternal condition, and how terrible your doom! Does it not now make your blood run cold and stagnate at your heart, to conceive it possible that, instead of rising from your graves with joy, to join the myriads thronging to take their place on the right hand of the Judge, you may be called out of your prison-house to be dragged as a perjured traitor to receive the condemnation you have merited; and instead of obtaining the crown of life as the reward of fidelity, to be given over into the custody of death and hell, to be tormented for ever with the devil and his angels as a cowardly deserter from the cause you had sworn to defend?

The text commands you,

*5th. To be faithful unto death.*—When you made a profession of religion, and enlisted into the army of the Captain of salvation, it was not for a short campaign, but for life. Having put on the Lord Jesus Christ, you are henceforth to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness—having set out in your way to heaven, you are not so much as to look back; you are to press on towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. You are not to use your religion as you do your Sabbath attire. It must be worn as your habitual garb—you must be clothed with it. Alas! there are many who make a profession of religion who are utterly ignorant of its great principles, and have

never felt its sanctifying power; they put on a profession as an upper garment to cover the native deformity of an unregenerated heart, and to impose on their fellow-men. Hence it is that so many apostatize—they did not count the cost before they entered on their undertaking, and they are not able to finish. So inadequate are their conceptions of the real excellency and vast importance of religion, that they will not surrender a single temporary gratification to secure the eternity of glory which it promises.

It is vastly different, however, with the genuine Christian: he knows the truth, feels the power and experiences the joys of religion; his attachment to it strengthens with time, and the more he knows of it the higher does he value it; it incorporates all its benign influences with every faculty of his soul, and deepens the features of its own lovely image on his heart. The service of Christ is to him more delightful than all the vanities of the world. Rather than desert the cause of Christ he would cheerfully suffer the loss of all things. It is the power of religion and the presence of the Saviour that throws the serenity of heaven over the martyr's countenance amid the fellest blasts of persecution—the keenest tortures of the rack—the hottest flames at the stake—and the most cruel death. The same holy influences support the dying saint under the gathering infirmities of decaying nature and the struggles of dissolution. His pains increase—his strength sinks—his eye closes—his grasp of life relaxes—his pulse stops—his breath departs—the dews of death are on his clay-cold cheek, but his sainted spirit as it fled left fixed on his pale countenance the image of peace, and took its flight, attended by ministering angels, into heaven to receive “the crown of life.”

## II. ATTEND NOW TO THE GRACIOUS ASSURANCE.

“I will give you a crown of life.”

Here notice,

1st. *The gift*—“A crown of life.” A crown is the highest object of earthly ambition, and the possession of it the loftiest pinnacle of worldly glory—to obtain it no toils, struggles, or sacrifices

are deemed too great. Rivers of human blood have flowed in the cause of ambition, and in forcing a way to a throne—and after its honours were secured, how transitory its possession, and harassing its cares! The glories which dazzled at a distance, like the lovely hues of the rainbow, vanish, when grasped, like the meteor, which emits a temporary flash and is then quenched for ever. And yet with what breathless eagerness and incessant toil are such honours sought by the children of men! The competitor in the games of ancient Greece submitted to a long period of previous training before he presented himself as a candidate for the laurel crown by which the conqueror was to be rewarded in the presence of applauding thousands of his countrymen. But between this crown of life and all the glory and honour of this earth there is no comparison. As eternity surpasses time, as heaven transcends earth, so does the celestial crown which the Saviour shall place on the heads of all his faithful followers in the midst of an assembled universe.

It is a crown of life, and this is indicative of the pure, lofty, and endless enjoyments to which it introduces. It is when the struggles of mortality are over, and the conflicts with corruption, and all the enemies of your spiritual welfare, are over, that this supreme felicity shall be obtained. Escaped from the wreck of a decaying body, your immortal spirit shall be the eternal inhabitant of a deathless world. You shall appear as one among the countless myriads who shall surround the throne of the Lamb, wearing crowns of life as brilliant and unfading as your own. When a few earthly monarchs meet to deliberate on the destinies of nations, how do the chroniclers of this world's transactions summon up all their powers of description and of flattery to magnify the importance of the rare occurrence;—but the vastest assembly on earth, the most splendid concourse of the monarchs of earth, dwindle into utter insignificance when compared to the meeting of all the ransomed of the Lord in heaven—every saint shall have in his hand a palm of victory, in his mouth a

song of triumph, and on his head a crown of life. Contemplate through the medium of prophecy the multitude, which no man can number, arrayed in white robes, and listen to their lofty song. With united voice they sing unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and to his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.

Meditate,

*2d. On the glorious giver.*—It is Christ who is to bestow the crown of life. Those who are to wear it have not won it by their own prowess, obtained it by their own merit, or inherited it by their natural birth. It is given freely by Him by whose blood it was secured, and by whose munificence it is bestowed. What shall be the emotions of the redeemed when they receive this inestimable gift from Him who created the heavens, formed the earth, and gave life to every order of animated being! How shall their hearts glow with unutterable emotions when this royal diadem of immortality shall be placed on their heads by Him whose toilsome life and excruciating death procured it for them! With one simultaneous burst of gratitude shall they cry, "Thou hast made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign with thee." It is beyond the power of imagination to conceive how they shall feel when those hands, still bearing the print of the nails by which he was fixed to the accursed tree, shall hold out the crown of life as the glorious token of his victory for them, and of their victory through him. When "on the cross he spoiled principalities and powers, making a show of them openly; and when he vanquished death, and him that hath the power of death, that is the devil." Eternity will seem too short to show forth all his praise.

Reflect,

*3d. On the solemn period at which this crown shall be bestowed.* The text directs forward our expectations to the solemn period of dissolution, when this reward shall be obtained. This advantage is peculiar to Christianity. There are many

circumstances associated in our minds with death which render it truly appalling. The pains, the griefs, the dying conflict, the shroud, the coffin, the dark grave, and the consequent corruption. The very thought of being torn from this warm and living world—from kind friends and endeared companions, rends the heart. But the bright prospects unfolded in the gospel to the departing Christian, reconcile him to all these, and secure for him a glorious victory over the king of terrors. At death the conquering hero lays down his crown, and leaves all his worldly glory behind him. He has no communion with those who herald his praise, sculpture on his tomb the paltry symbols of royalty, and with these emblems of rule distinguish the place which keeps a monarch's dust from the mass of mankind, who tenant with him the regions of the dead. But at death the Christian triumphs. Then he puts off his armour, and receives his crown. His conflicts terminate, his enemies are for ever defeated, and death is swallowed up in victory. Instead of death killing the immortal inhabitant, he has merely pulled down the frail tabernacle in which it was imprisoned, and allowed it to escape to glory, honour, and immortality. When we remember that it is the deathless spirit that thinks, feels, and enjoys, we are in some measure prepared to imagine the happy and glorious transition which takes place when a redeemed soul passes from time into eternity, leaves an emaciated and putrescent body to dwell with kindred spirits; and is severed from weeping friends to behold the face of Jesus. How great its transport when the music of heaven, the songs of angels, and the glories of eternity burst on its enraptured ears and astonished vision, and when it makes its first attempt to join in harmony with the countless throng, who are celebrating the triumphs of redeeming love.

But the crown of life shall be given in a more solemn and public manner to every believer at the resurrection of the just. The transactions of the day of judgment shall be awfully and inconceivably grand. Imagination staggers under the load of magnificent images by which its

dread occurrences are represented in Scripture. When the last sand has dropt from the hour-glass of time, then shall the whole system of nature begin to give way. The sun shall grow dim, the moon become as blood, the stars be quenched by the brilliancy of a more glorious light. The vaulted arch of heaven shall open, and the mighty Judge appear in his own glory, in the glory of his Father, and attended by all his angels. The archangel shall herald his approach, and blow the trumpet which shall announce the commencement of the last assize. Then shall the throne of judgment be set, and the books be opened. The graves shall give up the dead that are in them, and the sea the dead that are in it. Then the living shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and all the generations of men shall meet in one vast assembly, in the presence of faithful and fallen angels, to receive their changeless doom. Methinks I see the great white throne—the universal Judge—the mighty throng; there you shall stand—there I must appear. At that dread tribunal we must meet face to face, and give an account of all our privileges, and of this evening's service. Then the sentence shall be pronounced, which shall never be removed. Hear it, ye faithful followers of the Lamb, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Then shall ye receive the crown of life, and be admitted into eternal glory. Hear it, ye neglecters of the great salvation, and tremble at your awful doom. "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." "Then shall the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." Then an eternal order of things shall

commence. Hell shall remain to be the prison-house in which the ungodly shall be tormented for ever with the devil and his angels. Heaven shall remain to be the endless habitation of the righteous, when they shall dwell with Jesus, and all holy beings, and cast their crowns at the feet of him whose death saved them, and sing without ceasing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing—salvation be to the Lamb that was slain."

In conclusion, I call on you to continue faithful to Jesus in defiance of every opposition, even unto death. Every motive which is fitted to operate on a rational being is presented to you in the word of God. The Bible speaks to your hopes and to your hearts, to your desire of happiness and your dread of suffering, to your hope of heaven and your horror of hell. Oh! could I secure for you a repetition of that vision which John saw when in banishment for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus, it would produce a powerful impression on your mind. Were the heavens now to open and disclose the glories of its inhabitants, their number, their songs, their palms, and their crowns, how would you long to join their company and share their blessedness. These objects you cannot see by the eye of sense, but faith can penetrate within the veil, and realize all the visions recorded in this book. While you read it in the exercise of faith you hear their lofty anthems, you behold their glory, you listen to their welcomes. And the voice of the glorified Redeemer falls on your ear and rouses all your dormant energies. Your failing courage is revived, and your staggering purpose is confirmed. You hear him saying, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Amen.

## SERMON XXIX.

THE PREVALENCE OF INFIDELITY, AND THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

DELIVERED

BY THE LATE REV. W. THORPE,

OF BRISTOL.

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*"In those days shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."—Dan. ii. 44.*

At the close of our last lecture, when inquiring into the moral and religious character of Great Britain, your attention was fixed upon the British possessions in the East Indies, and on the melancholy scenes even now exhibited in that immense portion of the British empire.

Without further introduction, let us now return to our own coasts, and seriously consider the awful prevalence of infidelity in our own country. Infidelity is the highest insult that man can offer to the all-wise Creator: for, "he that believeth not God," says the apostle, "has made God a liar." This sin was a principal ingredient in the original transgression. Our first parents did not believe the Divine threatening, "In the day that ye eat thereof ye shall surely die." They did not believe that the threatened penalty would be carried into execution, or that their disobedience would be immediately followed by a state of misery and death entailed upon themselves and all their posterity. Thus infidelity brought ruin on the whole world. Afterwards, the tremendous catastrophe of the deluge, the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, the apostasy of the heathen nations from the truth, and all the judgments inflicted on the house of Israel from the time of their departure out of Egypt, through all the

subsequent periods of their eventful history, down to the present day. To this cause, principally, is to be ascribed the schism and the captivity of the ten tribes, the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and the captivity of Judah in Babylon—the final dissolution of their state, both civil and ecclesiastic, and all the slaughters, massacres, famines, and unparalleled horrors of their siege. Hence also their dispersion in infamy and bondage as witnesses of the truth of Christianity to all nations whither they are scattered, and to warn them lest they also fall under the same example of unbelief. Hence, too, their judicial blindness and hardness of heart, and all the sufferings of their long and painful captivity. See, then, in the history of this people, one truth—that, *in the sight of God, infidelity is the most horrid crime of which man can be guilty.*

Soon after the establishment of Christianity in the world, infidelity or atheism reared its hideous front even in the bosom of the Christian church. Denying the Father and the Son—"the only living and true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent," is branded by the apostle John with the name of *Antichrist*. In the closing vision of Daniel it was foretold that, when the reign of papal superstition



was hastening to its downfall, an atheistical power should rise up among the papal kingdoms, and spread ruin and desolation all around; which should endure only for a short time, comparatively: and the learned commentator, Faber, has clearly proved that this power can be no other than atheistical France. Modern infidelity, indeed, sprung up at the dawn of the Reformation; it was the venomous spawn of the mother of harlots, and destined to be the terrible scourge of its own parent. But as the commencement of the prophetic era is dated from the acts, not of individuals, but of states and civil governments, the reign of atheism did not actually commence until a whole nation, for the first time since a nation existed in the world, declared itself atheistical, and, having denounced the Son of God as an impostor, and Christianity as a fable, passed a decree that the faith of the French nation consisted only of two articles—that God is nature, and that there is no other God—except, indeed, atheistical gods, or the imaginary gods of an atheistical government—and that death is an eternal sleep. The monster, Antichrist, in his full development, his most detestable and most awful form, then commenced his dreadful but short-lived reign, as the last scourge of the guilty nations in the hands of the Almighty.

From that period the poison of infidelity circulated through whole kingdoms, with the force and the rapidity of lightning. From that time, also, infidelity and popery have been joined hand in hand in diabolical confederacy against all the existing establishments of the British empire. The continental nations exhibit, to this day, one collected and putrid mass of the abominations of popery, mingling with the blasphemies of atheism. Nor has our own country by any means escaped the pestilential contagion. Infidelity infects the bar, the army, the navy, the senate, the cabinet, the church, universities and colleges; the departments of literature, philosophy, medicine, legislature, and even theology. The press groans under it. "The lurking poison of unbelief (says Paley, in his *Moral Philosophy*) has been served up in every form that is

likely to surprise, allure, and beguile the imagination; in a fable, a tale, a novel, a poem—in interspersed and broken hints—in remote and oblique surmises—in books of travels, of philosophy, of natural history—in short, in every form except that of a professed and regular disquisition." Since Paley wrote his *Moral Philosophy*, the fatal poison has increased in strength, in virulence, and in extent of influence, beyond all comparison. It has descended from the higher, through the middling, down to the very lowest, orders of the community. I say the description of the body politic of the Jewish nation is here perfectly exemplified, "The whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint; and from the crown of the head to the sole of the feet there is no soundness, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores." Are not these frightful symptoms—are they not indications of approaching dissolution?

Infidelity appears, in some, open and avowed; and, with unblushing effrontery, denying the God of heaven, and threatening all existing establishments; in others it is disguised and concealed, but not so much so as not to be sufficiently notorious in its effects. In some it is speculative and practical infidelity unmasked; in others the unbelief of the heart is easily discernible in its pernicious fruits in their lives and manners. It is to be found in churchmen and dissenters; in men of moral decency and of open profligacy. It is embodied under three forms, principally, or three negative positions, the whole of which shake the foundations of Christianity, and close up the heart against the admission of the gospel. *First*, a denial of the attribute of divine justice, and consequently of the atonement of the Son of God, and the Scripture doctrine of future punishment. *Secondly*, a denial of the superiority not only of protestantism over popery, but of Christianity itself over Mahomedanism, Hindooism, or any other religion that only secures the ends of civil government. Thus, it is often said that all religions are equally good. And, *finally*, in a denial of the responsibility of man for what he believes, even to the God who made him,

as though the creature had a right to think against the Creator.

If these negative positions be once admitted, what becomes of the authority—the doctrines—the promises—the admonitions—the denunciations, and all the sanctions of the word of God? Moses and the prophets, Jesus Christ and his apostles, were all impostors, and Christianity itself is a cunningly or a clumsily devised fable. And yet these infidel sentiments, or sentiments like these, are cherished by many who speak favourably of Christianity—who attend places of Christian worship, both within and without the pale of the Established Church, and who would feel themselves insulted and scandalized if they were charged with infidelity: yet the charge is too just; infidelity is marked upon their brow, intermingled with their intellectual system, and oozing up in their language and conversation—in their habits and in their conduct; they may be orthodox in their head, but they are infidels at heart. And when we consider St. Paul's definition of the faith which hath the promise of eternal life, as made in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews—that faith is the demonstration of things not seen, and the substantial impress of the truth and of the reality of things hoped for—for it renders distant and invisible things as really influential upon the heart and conduct as though they were present and visible;—when we consider the effects of this holy principle, as exemplified in the ancient church, and described by the apostle in a subsequent part of the chapter;—and, finally, when we compare these effects with the present state of things, either in the church or in the world, we may well ask, if the Son of man should even now come, would he find faith on the earth? Alas! alas! we have not faith even as a grain of mustard seed. Your infidelity is absolutely inexcusable. All its strongest arguments and its impertinent cavils have been fairly and triumphantly refuted, on the arena of controversy; and all its insidious sophistries have been detected and exposed, beyond all recovery, a thousand times; and all its advocates, of every class have been baffled, confounded, and

overwhelmed. Let any sober and candid inquirer only read such writers as Paley, Leslie, Berkeley, Fuller, Chalmers, and others, with that attention which the immense importance the inquiry demands—on whatever side the truth may lie—and we safely leave him to form his own judgment. No man ever seriously sat down to investigate the evidences of Christianity, with any degree of attention, or with but a moderate share of candour, without rising from the investigation with the full conviction of its divine origin; and no man ever yet rejected the gospel who had not a wicked reason for it, which in the judgment of the Searcher of hearts is worthy of everlasting condemnation; and thus fully justifying the awful sanctions by which its claims are guarded and enforced: "He that believeth not shall be damned;" "He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him."

Unbelief, or the rejection of the Son of God, is more inexcusable now, in *professed Christians*, than it was in the Jews who persecuted and nailed him to the cross; for then he appeared as "a man of sorrows," in a form so humble as to disappoint all the expectations—the fond expectations they had long cherished of the temporal grandeur of the Messiah. With regard to the multitude, and even the heads, of that nation, what they did against the Lord Jesus was merely the result of ignorance. "For if they had known it, (says the apostle,) they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Their ignorance, indeed, was wilful; they shut their eyes, they closed their ears, they hardened their hearts; for this reason, their unbelief was inexcusable; and, therefore, wrath came upon them to the uttermost. But unbelievers in the *present* day—that is, all who do not receive the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, "made unto them of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," reject him in his glory and majesty, though exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour; and many who deny the Christian faith do it wilfully, against the rational conviction that he is both Lord and Christ. Inexcusable, then, is their

unbelief, and fearful will be their condemnation.

Nor has the *avowed infidel*, who avows the very profession of the Christian name, the least shadow of apology for his unbelief or his conduct: for, not to mention the internal evidences of Christianity—bearing the seal of divine authority impressed on every page—he has not only the most unquestionable testimony of the truth of what is revealed in the gospel history, but innumerable proofs, strong and incontrovertible, which could not be known to those who believed on Christ when he was in the world; such, for example, as arise from the literal accomplishment of many illustrious prophecies in the propagation of the gospel through the whole extent of the Roman world by the feeblest instrumentality—in opposition to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and all the inveterate prejudices of the human heart—in opposition to all the learning, and philosophy, and genius of the Augustan age—in opposition to the persecution of kings and emperors, and their armies—and that, too, with a rapidity never before or since exemplified in any conquest attended with the confused noise of the warrior, and of garments rolled in blood; in the unparalleled calamities that befell the Jewish nation at the last siege of Jerusalem; in their dispersion among all nations, and their miraculous preservation to this day as a distinct people from all the nations among whom they are scattered; in the partition of the old Roman empire into ten kingdoms; and, finally, in the rise and progress, and the begun overthrow of papal superstition, and Mohammedan delusion. The infidel has either examined these evidences of the truth of our holy religion, or he has not. If he has not, he is inexcusable for his *negligence*; if he has, his *obstinacy* can be resolved only into the enmity of the carnal mind against God: and, in either case, his unbelief is inexcusable, and his condemnation will be tremendous.

From the inexcusableness of infidelity, mark, in the next place, its *fearful malignity*. The epistle to the Hebrews was written only a few years before the de-

struction of Jerusalem; and the great object of the inspired author is to illustrate the malignant nature, and ruinous tendency, of unbelief, either in an individual or in a nation; and thus to warn his countrymen of the calamity with which they were going to be visited for their rejection of the Son of God. The Hebrews professing Christianity, to whom it was addressed, and for whom it was immediately intended, were violently attached to the ceremonial law. Whilst some of them regarded it as eternally binding on the church, because of its divine appointment, others pressed the observance of it as necessary to justification and salvation. They were, therefore, in imminent danger of apostasy from the faith, and acting in disobedience to the Lord Jesus, in those days of vengeance which were near approaching, by remaining at Jerusalem for the sake of the temple service, when the city should be invaded by the Roman army, instead of fleeing to the mountains for safety in obedience to their Lord's command. The design of the apostle, therefore, is to warn them of this danger, and the final consequences of unbelief and apostasy from their profession, and of any overt acts in disobedience to the Son of God. And how did he do this? He did it by various arguments drawn from the superiority of the gospel to the legal dispensation; from the divine majesty of the Founder of Christianity—as the brightness of the Father's glory, the Creator and Preserver of the universe—the Lord of angels, and the object of their worship; from his ineffable condescension and love in assuming the nature of man, that in that nature he might make reconciliation for man's iniquities—from the dignity of his mediatorial character, as the great prophet of the church by whom God hath spoken to us in the latter days; as the King of Zion, the sceptre of whose kingdom is a right sceptre, and whose throne shall stand for ever—and as the High-priest of our profession, a priest consecrated for ever after the order of Melchizedec; from his superiority to Moses, Joshua, and every other heavenly messenger, however exalted, whether human or divine; and, especially, from the tran-

ascendant superiority of his priesthood to that of Aaron, and his successors in office ; and on this branch of the subject, he leads them amongst the altars, priests, sacrifices, and ritual observances, of that magnificent dispensation, which he shows was preparatory only to a more glorious dispensation. This short statement contains, in fact, an epitome of the whole of that wonderful epistle, and upon these arguments, the apostle proceeds to illustrate the horrid nature and the damning consequences of unbelief, whether in an individual, or in a nation. Now, in the guilt of this fearful sin, Great Britain is deeply involved. Her guilt, in this respect, has been accumulating for upwards of a thousand years. Upon the same argument he founds the following admonitory exhortations, which are equally applicable to us—which apply with as much force to us as they did to the Jewish nation. Fear them ; they are the practical part of the epistle to the Hebrews, of which Luther said, “ It is of as much importance to the church, as the sun in the heavens is to the whole world—the world could do as well without the sun as the church of Christ without the epistle to the Hebrews.” “ Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard, lest, at any time, we should let them slip. If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward ; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation ?—which, at the first, began to be spoken by the Lord himself, and was afterwards confirmed unto us by signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.” You remember that the visits of wrath were then about to be poured out on Jerusalem. “ Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, lest he swear in his wrath that ye shall not enter into rest ; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you, an evil heart of unbelief in apostatizing from the living God. If they escaped not who refused to

hearken to him who spake on earth, (alluding to the promulgation of the law from mount Sinai,) how shall ye escape, if ye refuse to hearken to him who now speaketh from heaven : whose voice shook the earth, (at the delivery of the law,) but who hath now declared, I shake not the earth only, but heaven also, (the political heaven of the Jewish nation.) If they who despised the law of Moses, died without mercy, before two or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment shall ye be thought worthy who have trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and do despite to the Spirit of grace.” This is the guilt involved in unbelief. Again, we know who hath said, “ Vengeance is mine, I will repay.” And again, “ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” And again, it is written, “ the Lord shall judge his people.”

Brethren, this interesting epistle was the last alarm rung in the ears of the Jewish nation by an offended and departing God, before he poured out his wrath in the destruction of their city and temple—the last voice of departing yet lingering mercy, before he closed the gates of salvation against them. May this loud alarm be heard, and this tender, perhaps the last tender of mercy, be received by the inhabitants of the British empire !

Every blessing that God bestows upon man or upon a nation involves a degree of responsibility in exact proportion to its magnitude. Let us, then, upon this principle, examine the degree of guilt contracted by this nation. Long has Britain enjoyed the light of the gospel—the richest boon the God of heaven ever bestowed upon a nation. Long has she been favoured with the visible protection of a national providence, and with a series of wonderful and remarkable interpositions of the Divine favour. Witness the early introduction of the gospel to our forefathers in the apostolic age, and, probably, by an apostolic minister. Witness the number of burning and shining lights which burned and shone in Britain, even during the darkest ages of popery. Witness our early separation—such as it was

—from the church of Rome. Witness the defeat of the Spanish Armada, effected not by human agency, but almost entirely by the winds, and elements of nature. Witness our deliverance, in a subsequent reign, from the attempts of a gloomy tyrant to enslave both body and mind, at the glorious revolution of 1680—a revolution brought to pass without the hazard of a single battle, and almost without the shedding of a drop of blood. Witness the declaration of rights and the act of settlement, in which our liberties were for the first time enrolled in a charter, and stand, as we fondly hope, on an everlasting foundation. These are bright pages in the annals of our country, on which our forefathers wept with fond enthusiasm, and of which they often spoke with exultation and joy as they were accustomed to bring out their massive family plate on great festive occasions. But the formation of Bible and Missionary Societies was reserved by the peculiar care of Providence, according to prophetic intimations, for these latter days, to adorn the concluding part of the reign of George the Third. If unto whomsoever much is given of them much will be required—if the guilt of sin be aggravated in proportion to the number and the magnitude of the mercies that have been received and abused, Britain has reason to dread the full weight of God's indignation. She is deeply involved in the guilt of those nations who refuse to kiss the sceptre of Messiah the Prince, and which he will break in pieces with a rod of iron like a potter's vessel—in the guilt of those nations who refuse to believe the gospel of Christ, and who shall be destroyed with an everlasting destruction, when he shall be revealed with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance; and if the sufferings inflicted on the Jewish nation—the seed of Abraham, the friend of God, and “still beloved (as the apostle tells us) for the Father's sake”—which is never said of the Gentiles—in their last contest with the Romans, and especially in the last siege of their capital, were so terrible as to make the ears of all them that heard it tingle, how tremendous may we not fear will be the calamities inflicted

on the Gentiles when God shall visit them for the sin for which Jerusalem was overthrown!

Like Jerusalem, only a few years before the cup of trembling and death was put into her hand, Britain has been highly honoured in sending forth her missionaries to preach the gospel as a witness to all nations; but, like Jerusalem, too, she has rejected the only sacrifice, refused to hearken to him that spake from heaven, neglected the great salvation, trodden under foot the Son of God, counted the blood of the sacrifice as a common thing, and done despite to the Spirit of grace, and thus incurred severer punishment than the despiser of the law of Moses, who died without mercy. Great indeed have been her privileges, and great and manifold are the grounds of the Lord's controversy with her. While empires and continents, dense with population, into which her adventurous sons have penetrated in commercial enterprise, have been involved in moral darkness more palpable than that which Egypt once felt, the glorious light of the gospel has been shining upon her coasts, through the clouds of her iniquities, in noon-day brightness. But oh! how aggravated has been the criminality of those who, amidst the glorious shining around them, wilfully shut their eyes against the heavenly light! Oh, what a weight of guilt has been thus contracted! On what national grounds, then, can we hope that the cup of trembling shall not be put into our hands, when we are so expressly told by the God of heaven that all the kingdoms of the world that are upon the face of the earth shall be made to drink of it? “Ye shall certainly drink of it, as I live, saith the Lord of Hosts.” And will not the justice of God be vindicated in the infliction of his righteous judgments upon this guilty nation? Yes, verily! Our contempt of his authority, in not hearkening to the qualifications which his word requires from those who are intrusted with the administration of our public affairs, and the sceptical indifference of our rulers in the regulation of their decisions according to the rules and precepts laid down in the Holy Scriptures, and in sub-

serviency to the glory of God, bear witness against us. The groans of our oppressed countrymen—the magnitude of our national debt, principally contracted in fighting the battles of popery—the groans of our oppressed and enslaved colonial population, whose united cries have entered the ear of the Lord God of Sabaoth, bear witness against us. The guilt of our colonial system, and the obscenity of idolatries and the unnumbered murders committed in India, under the visible protection of the British government, bear witness against us. The incalculable multitudes of human beings whom we have butchered for the gratification of our ambition, and the extension of our dominions; in connexion with the corruption of our hierarchy—the myriads of immortal souls sinking into perdition, through the unfaithfulness of ungodly men appointed to the ministry for worldly and political purposes, bear witness against us. The reign of Antichrist herself, for whose re-establishment we lavished blood and treasure, again admitted to national countenance, bears witness against a land which early among the nations escaped from her pollution and thralldom, and which early testified against her domination, her blasphemies, and her usurpation. Where is now the zeal which once characterized our opposition to her who hath so often dyed her garments in the blood of God's dear saints? Where is that purity from her contamination by which we were distinguished among the nations? Where is that holy zeal that glowed in the bosom of Cranmer, Latimer, Bradford, and others, amidst the flames of Smithfield? Where is that tender affection which a grateful nation once cherished to the memory of those martyred heroes, to whom she owes all her civil and religious liberty? While these things have been forgotten by the multitude as a vision of the night, the government has been employing the energies of all Europe in support of the power which brought them to the stake.

The more intimate our connexion with that power the more deeply we are infected with that infidelity with which she is tainted to the core—the more deeply shall

we drink of the cup of God's wrath, which shall be filled to the brim, when great Babylon comes up in remembrance before God.

But it is not merely on the ground of the guilt of our national policy that the justice of God will vindicate its honours in the infliction of these awful judgments. The corruptions of society in general are alarming in the extreme. *Moral disease* of a deadly dangerous nature has overspread the land. Witness the obichanery of the law—the frauds and impositions in every branch of trade, and the aggravation of our commercial iniquity as connected with the colonial system. Because of swearing, profligacy, drunkenness, and Sabbath-breaking, the land mourneth. Impurity and prostitution, perhaps accelerated by the Malthusian theory of population, and by the sophistries of political economists, have awfully increased, and are still increasing. Infidelity, worldly mindedness, hypocrisy, fanaticism, pharisaicism, antinomianism, licentiousness, and a false liberality—ever ready to sacrifice the authority of revelation at the shrine of human reason—indicate too clearly that the power of vital religion has obviously declined, and impurity seems coming in like a flood. Where is that deep penitent spirit, that holy zeal for Christ, that entire separation from the world, and the dread of its spirit and maxims, lest the heart should not be right with God, which so eminently distinguished our holy men in former times?

In the Established Church the clergy are quibbling about tithes with their parishioners, and the parishioners with their clergy. The property of the church is assailed on every hand with a violence and a perseverance, and is defended by the clergy with a tenacity and a vigour, unknown in former ages; and the whole establishment seems to be reeling to its fall. In the dissenting interest many congregations are dissatisfied with their pastors, and pastors with their congregations. Multitudes of churches are destitute of pastors, and multitudes of pastors are destitute of churches; and, through the whole dissenting interest, there seems a general movement from one end of the

kingdom to another. The students of prophecy seem desirous of consigning their opponents to perdition, and their opponents charge the students of prophecy with madness; while the monster infidelity is looking on with a Satanic grin. The convulsions of the church, in fact, exactly correspond with the convulsions of nations. All things indicate that we are on the eve of some fearful crisis. The love of the world in the church has nearly extinguished the love of God, and the visible line of separation between the church and the world is withdrawn. All the features of "the last times," delineated by the spirit of prophecy, are visible and prominent in the midst of us. Even the balance of the state is sustained by impurity of motive. What a want of integrity, of principle, does the gazette prove, and even common honesty!

But the worst feature of our day is the want of a due sense of the evil, or of proper feelings with respect to the declension. We boast of our Bible Societies, and Missionary Societies, and, certainly, they are the brightest ornament of the day. In this light I have regarded them ever since they were established; and God forbid that I should say a word to damp their glorious ardour, or check their generous flow of benevolence! But is there not in these departments too great a prevalence of the spirit of pharisaism? Do we not sound a trumpet through the land, and spread our phylacteries, too wide, if not in the synagogue, at least on the platform? And do not these things remind us of the awful charge alleged by the faithful and true witness, whose eye is as a flame of fire, against the degenerate church at Laodicea, which some of our best expositors have considered as a type of the last state of the church universal immediately before he appears in judgment: "Thou sayest thou art rich, and thou hast need of nothing?" Is not this the language of our annual reports, our platform exhibitions, and even our fire-side conversations? The benevolence of the age, the spirit of the age, the spirituality of the times, are common topics; but we forget that genuine piety is modest, retiring, contrite, and humble, under a

sense of continued imperfections. But what says the faithful and true witness?—"Thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; and because thou art lukewarm, in the midst of all thy ostentation and splendour, I will cast thee out as an abomination." The bare supposition that this may possibly be the case should make us tremble.

If, then, we deeply ponder and seriously reflect upon our daring carelessness of human life—our infidel indifference as to the worth of immortal souls—upon the guilt of our colonial system, like a mighty Colossus bestriding the whole world; our participation in the abominations of Indian idolatry—upon the diffusion of infidelity through all orders of the community, and the general rejection of the gospel by the nation—upon the sin of our national administration, and the awful state of things, whether in the world or in the church, oh, what a weight of guilt from national transgression stands against us! "Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" We fear and tremble. We hope, but it is against hope; for can we hope to escape? It is an observation that cannot be too often repeated, or too deeply impressed upon the mind, that the worst feature of our case is the great ignorance of our real character, which generally prevails, and the torpid indifference which is manifested to our state of danger. There seems to be a fearful anxiety on the part of some men who ought to know better, and perhaps do know better, to conceal both from the nation and the church the prediction of those calamities which will certainly precede the millennium. But how will such men escape the charge of blood-guiltiness at the great day of the Lord? Will this ward off a single blow, lengthen out our tranquillity for a single day, or lighten the weight of God's indignation? Whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, the vengeance of God is denounced against these lands, and will assuredly be executed! Great Britain is one of the ten kingdoms symbolized by the ten toes of

the great and terrible image that must be broken to pieces together, and with the ten horns of the fourth beast which shall be destroyed and committed to the flames, unless—unless a degree of reformation, of which there is not the remotest expectation or probability, can be effected. -

Is, then, the case of Great Britain certainly hopeless? Is there no avenue by which she may escape? Are we really to believe that this vast empire, upon whose dominions the sun never sets in his diurnal or annual courses; and whose influence is still more extensive, reaching, as from a common centre, to all nations, whether barbarous or civilized, must inevitably perish? Is not the invoking prayer of the righteous man availing with God? Does it not move the hand that moves the universe? Doubtless! But, however fanatical such a sentiment as the following may appear to the purblind eye of infidelity, it is unquestionably warranted by the Holy Scriptures, that, when a guilty people have filled up the measure of their iniquity, prophets and righteous men are forbidden by the God of nations to intercede for them, and he has plainly told them that he will not hear them. Thus he said to Jeremiah, Thou shalt not pray to this people, neither cry to me for them; for I will not hear thee. But when Abraham was pleading on behalf of the cities of the plain, did not the Judge of all the earth wait till his servant gave the signal for destruction, and assure Abraham that if only ten righteous men could be found in Sodom, the whole city should be spared for their sakes? May not, then, the number of righteous men which our country nourishes in her bosom prove her security? I bless God that there are not only ten, twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty, but a large number of righteous men this day in Britain, who, instead of boasting of the spirituality and the religion of our land, actually sigh and cry for the abominations that are done in it; and who are weeping between the porch and the altar, saying, "O Lord, spare the remnant of thy people, and give not thine heritage to reproach." But was there not an equal or rather a much larger number, especially in proportion to the

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population, of righteous men in Judea only a few years before Jerusalem was destroyed? You have not surely forgotten that three thousand were converted to the obedience of the faith in one day, five thousand the next day, multitudes, both of men and women, whose numbers are not mentioned; that a great company of priests were also converted; and that God still continued to add to the church—not as we add to the church now, ten, twenty, or thirty at most, at our church meetings, and which is considered a surprising number—but multitudes, daily, of such as should be saved; and that, besides all this, the word of the Lord was mighty, and prevailed through Judea, Samaria, and all the regions beyond Jordan. And how holy and dignified was the character of these first Christians under the Pentecostal effusion of the Holy Ghost? How superior to the most eminent Christians of the present day! They continued with one accord in the apostle's doctrine, and in breaking of bread, and holy sacrifice, and in praising God. They had one heart, one soul, one common property; and even the heathen were constrained to say, "See how these Christians love one another!" And did their prayers or their persons prove the security of their beloved city and nation?

But will the Judge of all the earth destroy the righteous with the wicked? "That be far from me, saith the Lord." An ark was built for Noah and his family before the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up. Zoar was prepared for Lot before the Lord rained fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah. A place of safety in the mountains of Judea was prepared for the devoted followers of Jesus before Jerusalem was laid in ruins by the Roman emperor, to which they fled, in obedience to the Lord's command, and escaped the fate of their unfortunate countrymen. And, in like manner, some ark of salvation—some Zoar at a safe distance from the outpouring of wrath—some shelter upon the mountains—some refuge—some asylum shall be prepared for the pure and the regenerate, to which they shall flee and be safe.



But you still deny it; and you insist that the Christian benevolence which Britain has originated and still so ably supports—her Bible Societies and her Missionary Societies, and the benefits which, by their agency, she has conferred, and is still conferring upon the heathen world, prove her security. I candidly confess that I was once of this opinion, and I called these excellent societies not only the brightest ornament, but *the strongest safeguard* of our country; and they are still dear to my heart, and command any service I can render them, however feeble it may be, to the utmost extent of my ability. But can they admit of a comparison with the apostolic church at Jerusalem, and their godlike institutions, of which it is said, “that the multitudes of them that believed were of one heart and one soul; neither said any man that aught of the things that he possessed was his own;” and if they were possessors of lands, or of houses, they sold them and brought the price thereof, and threw it into one common treasury for the relief of the brethren, and for the furtherance of the gospel? How contracted is the benevolence that characterizes the church at the present day, however excellent in itself, and however creditable, when compared with that of the mother of all the churches, walking under the influence of the Spirit of holy love poured down upon her without measure? Will the labours of our Missionary Societies, however creditable, bear a comparison with those of the apostles and their fellow-labourers planting the gospel—where?—not only in Judea, in Galilee, in Samaria, and in all the regions beyond Jordan—not only in lesser Asia, Greece, Italy, the then great theatres in the world; but northward as far as Cesarea; southward, as far as Ethiopia; eastward, as far as Parthia and India; and westward, as far as Spain and Great Britain, according to the united testimony of all contemporary historians, both civil and ecclesiastic, whose testimony is further confirmed by that of the apostle to the Gentiles, who, in his Epistle to the Colossians, wrote only a few years—about seven—before the destruction of

Jerusalem, tell us that the gospel had come into all the world (the Roman world) and had been preached to every creature under heaven (under the political jurisdiction of the Roman empire)?

Once more. Will the benefits, invaluable and immortal as they are, which we are conferring upon the heathen nations, admit, for a moment, with the comparison of the gift of a Saviour—the gift, *I say of a Saviour*—which Jerusalem conferred upon the world? And yet the holy city was laid in ashes, and her children sent forth into a long and terrible captivity. As before Jerusalem was destroyed, a way was prepared for the church of God in the Roman empire, so before the vials of wrath are emptied upon the fragment, or the whole kingdoms of the empire, a safety-place must be prepared for the church beyond its limits. And is not this the great work which the Bible Society and our Missionary Societies are now executing under the protection of a special providence; and when this purpose is executed, may not Britain be destroyed, as the Babylonian, the Persian, the Macedonian, and the Roman empires were destroyed, when the end for which God had raised them up was accomplished? When the machine has done its work, may it not be broken or laid aside?

But how long will it be to the end of these wonders? Is the great and terrible day of the Lord near at hand? Is this the crisis of the nations, and of Britain's destinies? *A miraculous degree of inspiration* is necessary to enable any man to answer these questions positively in the affirmative, and as I make no pretensions to such inspiration, it behooves me to guard against such a presumption. “The Father holdeth the times and seasons in his own power.” “Secret things belong to the Lord our God; and the things that are revealed belong to us and our children.” But as he has been pleased to lay before us several chronological prophecies, doubtless with some wise and gracious design, it is our duty to examine them, and see whether, by comparing them among themselves, and with the general train or system of prophecy, and

with the signs of the times, something may not be discovered to put us on our guard, and to encourage the faithful servants of God to bear up with patience under the trial of their faith, which we are told is much more precious than gold, though it be tried in the fire, and shall be found to praise, and glory, and honour, at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ!

The spirit of prophecy informed Daniel, that at the time of the end, the very crisis which we have supposed to be near at hand, many shall be purified and made white, but that the world shall go on to do worldly. He further observes, and the passage is very remarkable, that "none of the wicked shall understand these events when they come to pass, but that the wise shall understand them, for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." Seventy prophetic weeks, or 490 years, according to the chronological prophecies of Daniel, were to intervene from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem to the *first* advent of the Messiah, and the prophecy was well understood by the Jewish nation. At the time of his appearance every eye was awakened, and every ear was attentive, both in the land of Judea, and in all the nations where the Jews resided, to mark the signs that immediately indicated his coming. And not only so, but this prophecy had been translated into the Greek language, which at that time was universally read and universally understood. A general expectation of his appearance prevailed through the whole world. Here, then, is a numerical prophecy—one of the most mysterious prophecies in the whole book of God, but yet it was plainly understood *before* the event predicted came to pass: for the whole world was in expectation of its fulfilment. The learned Mede and Prideaux have clearly proved that Daniel, or rather the interpreting angel of the remarkable prophecy, not only foretold the precise time of the Saviour's advent, but that he divided the history of his life into *three* distinct periods; the *first* of which he spent in obscurity; the *second* compre-

his precursor, John the Baptist; and the *third*, which, though its existence is incomparably the most important, includes the closing scene of his life and death. They have, moreover, proved that the spirit of prophecy foretold the *year*, the *month*, the *week*, the *day* when the Messiah should be cut off, not for himself, but for the transgression of the people; when he should finish transgression, make reconciliation for iniquity, bring in an everlasting righteousness, abolish the Jewish sacrifices, and confirm the covenant of redemption.

Three prophetic years and a half, or 1260 years, are frequently mentioned by Daniel and St. John, as the period that should intervene from the full dominancy of papacy, until the *second* coming of the Messiah to destroy the man of sin, to break in pieces the papal kingdom, and to establish his millennial kingdom in its meridian brightness. As the object of these lectures is not a learned or critical analysis of chronological prophecies, but is rather of a practical nature, as will be seen from the last lecture, I shall not presume to say with a confident tone of infallibility when the mysterious 1260 years commenced; whether in the reign of the tyrant Phocas—according to the opinion of Faber and other writers of high authority; or in the reign of Justinian, as mentioned by Freer, and Irving, and other respectable writers; or not until the papal throne was seen in its full growth and full development, when the Roman pontiff was made a secular as well as a spiritual sovereign in the reign of Charlemagne, according to the opinion of Bishop Newton, Sir Isaac Newton, and other writers of very great authority. It would seem, from many prophetic intimations, that when the 1260 years have run out their course, or very soon after it, the man of sin must be destroyed, the kingdom of the papacy broken to pieces, the Ottoman empire overthrown, and the sacred seed of Abraham be restored to the land of their fathers. But the man of sin is not yet destroyed, the papal kingdoms are not yet broken in pieces, the Ottoman empire is still standing, the seed of Abraham are still scattered among the nations;

we may therefore, I think, conclude that the mysterious period is not yet fulfilled, and that a great work yet remains to be done on the theatre of the world. Recent events, however, especially the late revolution in France, the concussion of the continental nations, and the sudden and almost instantaneous change of public opinion, both in this country and through all Europe, prove that the Supreme Ruler of the nations may accomplish, and very probably will accomplish, a great work in a short time.

In correspondence with the chronological prophecy, several signs or prognostics are given us as harbingers announcing the speedy coming of the Son of man. "Learn (says our Lord) a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh; so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." Although the Father keepeth the times and seasons in his own power—although no man knoweth the day or the hour wherein the Son of man cometh—although it was not given in commission to the Son himself, to make it known in his public ministry, yet by comparing the signs of the times with the numerical prophecies, we may know with certainty when the day of the Lord is advancing rapidly upon us. The great and broad outlines of prophecy are open to the man who is exercised in the study of the prophetic writings, even long before the events are fulfilled; but the smaller lines, which refer to the times, the places, and the circumstances of their accomplishment, are faint, are less distinctly defined; and the Saviour of the world has been pleased that a considerable obscurity should rest upon the prophetic dates, until the consummation is drawing near. Thus the interpreting angel informed Daniel that the prophecy should be closed up and sealed till the time of the end, when the book was to be opened, the seals were to be removed, the prophetic dates to be developed, many were to run to and fro, and prophetic knowledge was to be increased. The period here foretold is that very period in which we are now living: for never since the time of the reformation

has there been such a deep and intense attention paid to sacred prophecy, as within the last thirty or forty years. Yes! the seals are being removed; the signs of the times are throwing light upon the prophetic dates—the prophetic dates are reflecting their light upon the signs of the times; the general or descriptive prophecies lend their radiance also to the stock of general information; and all together form a concentrated body of light, which is quite conspicuous to all except those who are wilfully blind.

Among these signs or various precursors of the appearance of the Son of man coming in his kingdom, witness,

1st. *The present concussion of the nations.*

We have entered upon a new era in the history of the world; revolution has begun its march; the great wheel of human affairs has turned round, nearly so at least, in our own time; and He who hath said, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn, until he shall come whose right it is," hath plainly told us where all these mighty revolutions shall terminate—in the destruction of the man of sin, the breaking in pieces of the papal kingdom, the overthrow of the Ottoman power, the conversion of the heathen nations in their national capacity, and finally—O transporting thought!—in the triumphant establishment of the millennial kingdom of our beloved Redeemer.

2d. *The smallness of all the provinces of the Ottoman empire, with the convulsions of the papal kingdoms,* is another sign of the nearness of that great day.

Popery and Mohammedanism—the eastern and the western scourges of the church of God—rose about the same time; and about the same time, according to prophetic intimation, they will fall in one common ruin.

3d. *The fearful progress of infidelity* is also mentioned as one of the signs of the nearness of the great and terrible day of the Lord.

Daniel foretold that, when the ruin of the papacy was hastening to its close, an atheistical power should rise and do according to its will, exalting and magnifying itself above every God, speaking

marvellous things or blasphemies against the God of gods, and that it should prosper until the time of the indignation determined should be accomplished. And have we not seen an atheistical monster arising out of a putrid, corrupted mass of matter in these latter days; pushed and goaded on by infernal ferociousness—breaking down the thrones, and overturning the altars, of pagan superstition—stalking among the nations with portentous strides—hovering around every thing sacred and divine, shaking their foundations—crucifying the Son of God as an impostor—speaking marvellous things against the God of gods, blaspheming his name, denouncing his excellencies, and rolling pestilence and death through Europe and the world? Then the reign of the last enemy, I mean the last political enemy, of God and man, is come; nor was the restoration of the Bourbons—the temporary re-establishment of popery—the late expulsion of Charles the tenth—any interruption to its reign. In the present government of France he is imbodied in full power, and ere long will discover his impious and his singular character. Under his reign we are now living, but blessed be God it is but of short duration. The apostles Paul, Peter, and Jude, foretell that in the last day, in the last times, perilous times shall come; atheistical mockers shall arise and ask, “where is the promise of his coming!” deriding the second advent of the Lord Jesus, willingly ignorant of the deluge; boasters, proud, blasphemers, high minded, traitors, incontinent, despisers of those that are good, fierce, presumptuous, self-willed, despisers of government, speaking evil of dignities, overbearing, boasting of “the march of intellect and scientific discoveries”—but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth—resisters of the truth, reprobate concerning the faith, men of corrupt minds, promising the world liberty while they themselves are the slaves of corruption—in short, infidels and atheists, denying the Father and the Son—the only Lord God, who made the heavens and the earth, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent to be the Saviour of the world.

These are the leading features of the last days, of the last times—these are the characteristics of *these* days and of *these* times; we therefore are living in the last days of the last times, and may consequently expect the speedy appearance of the Son of man in the glory of his kingdom. “When the Son of man comes, (says the Lord,) shall he find faith on earth?” Such an interrogation, from lips so sacred, on a subject the most awful that could drop from human lips, certainly implies the strongest negation. It is as though he had said, “When the Son of man comes in his glory, the faith of God’s elect will scarcely be found amongst men.” The apostle of the Gentiles, when speaking of the breaking off of the Gentiles, or the unnatural branches, from the true olive for their unbelief, and the re-ingrafting of the Jews, the natural branches, into their own olive tree, of which the Abrahamic covenant is the root, tells us that “God, who hath concluded the Jews in unbelief, hath also concluded the Gentiles in unbelief; and afterwards that he will have mercy upon both, and that there shall be a re-ingrafting both of the Jews and the Gentiles, when the Redeemer shall come to Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob; and that the receiving of the Jews shall be as life from the dead to the Gentile world.”

The state of things is now rapidly advancing towards this awful state of unbelief, which made the great Bossuet—who was a man endowed with powers of the highest order, though a Roman Catholic; in his modest, admonitory, and most astonishing exposition of the eleventh chapter of this epistle to the Romans—and the only rational exposition which has ever yet been offered—say “Let the Catholic church, let all Christian churches, let the heretics of every name (by which he means Protestants) read this chapter, and tremble for the calamities that are coming upon them. For my own part, I never read it, but I tremble to the centre of my being.”

4th. *The propagation of the gospel in heathen lands beyond the limits of the papal empire, to prepare a way for the church of*

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God, before the kingdoms of the empire are broken to pieces and annihilated, is another sign that indicates that the day of God is at hand.

The gospel of the kingdom (says our Lord) must be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations—not, you will observe, for the *conversion* of all nations, this glorious and vast accession to the kingdom of our Redeemer is an achievement in reserve for the millennial age—but as a *witness* to all nations; and, when this witness has made the circuit round the world, then the end of the age, or of the present state of things, shall come. My brethren, fix your attention upon the operation of Bible and Missionary Societies, their union and co-operation. Observe their progress, mark their success from kingdom to kingdom, from region to region, and see in them the symbolical angel of the apocalyptic vision flying in the midst of heaven, shaking eternal blessings from his wing, and having the everlasting gospel to preach to all that dwell upon the face of the earth. This remarkable sign moving with speed and majesty, in the spirit of universal charity, indicating the coming of the Lord, is visible to all nations; for, if you will look into the book of Revelations, you will find that this symbolical angel takes wing just before the day of the Lord, and, it is a remarkable fact that these noble instances of Christian benevolence originated in Great Britain at the momentous crisis when the papal kingdom began to shake under the visitations of divine wrath. Yes, it was amidst the raging madness of atheism, and the horrors of anarchy and revolution, that these societies arose with placid dignity, combining, as they grew, the talent, the wealth, the influence, the energy, of countless myriads of various nations and all denominations of Christians, in one single effort to rescue the heathen world from the bondage of corruption. Brethren, the finger of God has here marked this sign of the coming of the Lord; for “it is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.”

5th. *The deep interest that has of late years been awakened to the Jewish nation, the extraordinary movements now taking*

*place among that wonderful people, and the eager expectation which they cherish at this moment of the coming of the Messiah,* is another sign that he will speedily make his appearance.

A small remnant of the seed of Abraham, “according to the election of grace,” has been of late years converted to the Christian faith, like the gleanings of the vine after the vintage, only here and there a berry on the uppermost bough. Christian churches, expressly of converted Jews, have been formed and are still forming in this country, on the continent of Europe, and in the heathen world. The Jews in Poland, where they exist in great numbers, are formed into armies, and, it is said, are the finest soldiers in Europe, are commanded by officers, generally, of their own nation; and they frequently assemble in their synagogues for fasting and humiliation, and united supplications to the God of their fathers with their faces turned towards Jerusalem—the ruins of the temple—according to the import of Solomon’s prayer, under the very general persuasion that the days of their tedious captivity are hastening to a close, and that their God will very speedily turn again the captivity of his people. In Germany, in Poland, in Russia, and in various kingdoms in the eastern world, an earnest expectation of the speedy coming of the Messiah is as intense as that which preceded his first advent, when he came to his own people, and his own people received him not.

Within the last twenty or thirty years scarcely two hundred Jews were to be found in Judea, but at this day there are upwards of twenty thousand, and their number is increasing every year; indeed, the whole nation, especially in the east, seems to be at this instant, while I am speaking to you, on the move towards Palestine. All these things speak aloud, as if the voice of God were telling us that that prophecy is now going to be fulfilled which says that, after the children of Israel have been for many days (and many days they have been) without a king, without a sacrifice, without a priest, without an ephod, without teraphim—afterward shall they seek the Lord their God

and David their king, and shall fear the Lord in his goodness in the latter days. The throne of David, be it remembered, was the throne of the Messiah; the everlasting, absolute dominion promised to David was the dominion of the Messiah. Such is the great subject of all the prophecies, and especially of our text. The present state, therefore, of that extraordinary people is another indication that the restitution of all things, and the second advent of the Messiah, is at hand.

Once more. *The infidel insensibility of the world, and the torpid indifference of the church, to the signs of the times, forms also a distinct subject of prophecy.*

With regard to the world we know that the day of the Lord shall come upon it as a thief breaking into the house at midnight; so that while they cry peace, peace, sudden destruction cometh upon them, and they shall not escape. As in the day when Noah entered into the ark they ate, they drank, they builded, and planted, and knew not, until the flood came and swallowed them up, so also shall it be in the day wherein the Son of man cometh. As in the day that Lot departed out of Sodom they ate, they drank, they builded, and planted, and knew not till the Lord rained down fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all, so shall it be in the day wherein the Son of man shall be revealed. He was not revealed at the destruction of Jerusalem, and the word revelation is the very same word that is employed when it is said, "He shall be revealed from heaven with flaming fire." Thus it was with the infidels before the flood—thus it was with the infidels in Sodom—thus it was with the infidels in Jerusalem when Jerusalem was destroyed—and thus it will be with the infidels in these latter times. Reckless of the future, they are victims dancing round the altar on which they are just going to be immolated; for that day shall come as a snare upon the whole earth.

But let us look for the last sign within the sacred enclosure of the church of God. This, also, it is very remarkable, is the subject of prophecy. Our Lord communicated several parables to his disciples concerning his second advent. In one of

these the state of the church herself, as to the expectation of the return of her Lord, is accurately described: "Then—that is at the time of his coming—then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps." Mark what follows,—  
"While the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." The whole visible church, hypocrites and real Christians alike, are represented as sinking into a death-like slumber, from which they are only aroused by the sudden outcry and annunciation of the coming of the Judge. How exactly is this descriptive of the present state of the Christian church! And she will slumber on, though a thousand righteous Noahs should ring the alarm in her ears—she will still slumber on; for the word of God cannot be broken. "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he comes shall find watching." But many professing Christians, alas! have assumed a very different attitude, and have actually joined with atheists and scoffers in asking, "Where is the promise of his coming!—for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were." How clearly does the omniscient Jesus foresee this, and how distinctly does he foretell this awful state of the church!

But I must now hasten to conclude. Upon the whole, we learn that *the signs of the times shed their light upon the mysterious dates of prophecy, and the mysterious date of chronological prophecies shed their light upon the signs of the times.* The concussions of the nations—the simultaneous shaking of the Ottoman and papal empires—the propagation of the gospel beyond the limits of the western Roman empire—the state of feeling and excitement in the Jewish nation—the infidel insensibility of the world—and the death-like slumbers of the church—the midnight cry which has recently been raised,

and is now ringing in the ears of the infidel world and the sleeping church—all indicate that the mysterious 1260 years, if not past, are, at least, nearly run out their course. "When you see these things, know that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." "No man knoweth the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh," yet, from the signs of the times, and the chronological prophecies, we may know with certainty that it is rapidly approaching.

But I must conclude. It would be idle—I could not acquit myself to my own conscience, to you, or to the bar of God—were I to lead you in speculating into prophecy without having a view to practical purposes. It is trifling with the sacred Scriptures unless we bring a part of them to bear upon the conscience and upon the conduct. Whenever the tide of death shall arrest us, there will be an end of the world, and all the kingdoms thereof, as far as we are personally interested in them. *Our own salvation* is the great concern of each individual, and, in connexion with this, the interests of our beloved country. May God grant to us his blessing! Amen.

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#### MAN BY NATURE AVERSE FROM RELIGION.

RELIGION, it is acknowledged, brings its pains; just because it comes from heaven to maintain a deadly conflict in the soul, with principles and dispositions which are rebellious against heaven, and destructive to the soul itself. Nothing can be more thoughtless or unknowing than the strain in which some have indulged in the recommendation of it, as if it were all facility and enjoyment. You have possibly heard or read graceful periods of descant on the subject, representing to young people especially, that *their* unsophisticated principles, *their* lively perception of the good and the fair, *their* generous sentiments, *their* uncontaminated affections, are so much in unison with the spirit of piety, that it is a

matter of the utmost ease for them, for such as you, to enter on the happiness of the religious life. Some little obstruction surmounted, one light spring made, and you regain the walks of Eden! Did you believe it? If you did, what unaccountable caprice, what pure wantonness of perversity, could it be that withheld you? Or, if you were induced to make some short attempt in the way of experiment, did you not wonder how it should happen, by a peculiar untowardness in your case, that these youthful qualities, so congenial with piety, and so easy to be resolved into it, did nevertheless prove obstinately repugnant to the union? Did you not think, Why, then, this aversion to read the Bible, or to retire for serious meditation and devotional exercise, or to any act of duty to be done simply in obedience to God? But the declamation which you had heard was idle rhetoric, or wretched ignorance.—*Foster*.

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#### LET YOUR SUBJECT, NOT YOURSELF, BE PROMINENT.

I NEVER heard a man who succeeded so well in averting the attention of his hearers from himself to the subject. Like the priest under the Jewish hierarchy, he disappeared in the cloud of incense that himself sent up. His positions, though strong and important, were clothed in language whose peculiar and providential felicity it is, that it is universal language; the language which genius reverences and ignorance understands;—the language of the poet and of the philosopher, of divinity and of the heart, the language of the Scriptures. He spake as a father to a wayward child, as a judge to a criminal to confess and be forgiven, as a guide to a wanderer to return and to rest. After he had descended from the pulpit, though the thunder of his eloquence was hushed, his countenance spoke still, and his visage retained the brightness of that light and holy elevation.—*Eclectic Review*.

## SERMON XXX.

ON THE BEING AND PERFECTIONS OF GOD:

PREACHED

BY THE REV. DR. STYLES.

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*"This God is our God for ever and ever."—Psalm. lxxviii. 14.*

My brethren, the mechanics of this great metropolis, it is my province to commence a course of lectures, especially designed for your instruction in the highest branches of practical knowledge which can possibly engage your thoughts, and which has, therefore, the most urgent claims upon your serious and devout consideration. The character of the times in which you live is highly favourable to your mental culture. It has raised you to a state of intellectual eminence, hitherto unknown to the classes of the community to which you belong, and this, as is perfectly natural, has inspired you with the ardent hope of improving your social condition. Already you begin to feel that knowledge is power; but this just axiom of philosophy you are in great danger of employing against yourselves, of misapplying to purposes subversive of your own happiness and injurious to the best interests of society. As yet, the knowledge you have acquired has merely awakened the thinking faculty, and raised you from the slumbers of ignorance. Your minds are partially illuminated with science, but you have scarcely attained to the grandeur of its higher principles, or to a rigid adherence to that course which would secure to you all the benefits of its practical results. The things which you best understand you know but imperfectly—you are but learning their rudiments, and from these your attention is diverted to other subjects, which you have not the means of under-

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standing, and in which you are likely to be misled by persons more pretending, but not less ignorant than yourselves; or who, if they are better informed, aim only at some selfish or sinister object of their own, which they hope to realize by making you their dupes and victims. They attempt to dazzle your imagination by wild theories, rather than to inform your reason by sound principles. Their grand design is not to reform but to revolutionize, and to try the most visionary experiments, which cannot be attempted without subverting every government upon the face of the earth, and destroying the whole system of social order, not only in its frame, but in its principles. A chaos is a necessary preliminary to their new creation. Whatever is, must give place to an edifice of society which is to be built in perfect contempt of the former architecture, on the principles of a demoralizing necessity from which the oratory and the altar are to be excluded, whose materials are to consist, not of immortal men, but of mere machines operated upon by uncontrollable circumstances; these circumstances to be first created by the redoubtable projector of the sublime absurdity. You will, my brethren, in a moment perceive that I here refer to the new scheme of society, which among your own class especially has obtained so many supporters. Of its author I know nothing. Were it not for the atheism and the consequent materialism which disgrace the entire system, and which he

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maintains are essential to its success, I should pronounce him to be an amiable enthusiast, whose imagination, darkened by the evils of the social state, and perpetually brooding over them, can devise no remedy but a perfectibility incompatible with the nature of that state, and which can never be even approached without the agency, which he not only disregards, but utterly contemns—I mean that of true religion.

We admit, with the new theorists, that the face of society is deformed by a thousand blemishes, and that its fitful and irregular pulsation indicates that the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. With them we feel that effectual, political, and moral remedies must be applied, or that a convulsive dissolution of the whole frame of civilized life cannot be long averted. But we fearlessly tell them that we have no confidence in their empirical nostrums—we dare not intrust a nation's weal in the crisis of its fate to those who leave out of their calculations the inherent evils of human nature, who would remove from those evils the most effectual restraints that ever have been imposed upon them under the considerations furnished by piety, and the hopes and fears inspired by the consciousness of accountableness and the sublime realities of a future world.

My brethren, if we could imagine so preposterous an idea as a company of atheists inflamed with a generous ardour for the public good, their bosoms overflowing with philanthropy, and that philanthropy assuming the form of the most devoted patriotism, could we with safety appoint them to be the restorers or the guardians of our social happiness? Men who entertain principles at variance with those which mankind in general regard as sacred and fundamental, take great delight in their propagation. If atheists, therefore, had the formation of the public mind, or if the political and civil institutions of their country were under their direction or subject to their control, we may be perfectly certain that the negation of a Deity would stand pre-eminently forth in all their works and distinguish all their policy. This happens precisely

in the new scheme of society. From an attentive perusal of one of its most elaborate expositions, we learn that it renounces as far as it regards recognition and worship, every religion, true or false, that has ever obtained in the world; proscribing all reference to God, both as the Creator and the Supreme Ruler of the universe. That it ridicules every idea of rewards and punishments—that as character is formed *for* the individual and not *by* him, he has no responsibility, is neither the object of praise nor of blame—that communities as well as individuals are the mere creatures of a circumstantial necessity controlling them in spite of themselves—and that the only hope of improving their condition and emancipating them from the calamities which degrade and oppress them, must arise from the operation of a new and totally opposite class of circumstances: and this mighty revolution they are to achieve for themselves. That is, those, who from their very nature, must be the passive victims of whatever circumstances surround them, and which it is affirmed, they have no moral power to resist, are suddenly to assume a supernatural and independent energy, and instead of being carried along as heretofore, with the stream of destiny, they are to roll back the tide which had threatened to engulf them, and this not for the purpose of securing their moral liberty, but simply that they may become as passive as before, the creatures of a necessity which, though it affords them a greater sum of present enjoyment, still degrades them below the level of intelligent and accountable beings. Now, allowing for the sake of argument, that the co-operative system is fraught with all the advantages which the most generous enthusiasm might hope to derive from it, we maintain that it is utterly impracticable on the principles of atheism which its author assumes; but that these and still greater advantages may be more than realised on the principles of that religion which he impiously rejects, and which is founded on the being and perfections of God, as partially displayed in the works of nature, and more extensively revealed in the Holy Scriptures. In

illustrating these positions, I am persuaded I shall ensure your candid attention.

*The very assumption of atheism by an individual who seeks to be distinguished as the benefactor of society, and who proclaims himself the enemy of its existing institutions, ought to awaken distrust of his mental capacity, as well as excite disgust at his moral depravation.*

Atheism, wherever it exists, is the result of some peculiar conjunction of disastrous influences. An atheist is the unhappy victim of a mental obliquity, of a strange perversion of the understanding, which renders him incapable of comprehending the laws of evidence and the principles of right reason.

There are certain *principia* on which, with a few exceptions, all men are agreed. The foundation of all reasoning, concerning being and events, for instance, is a supposed or acknowledged connexion between cause and effect. By cause is meant that something, be it what it may, which produces existence, or any change of existence, and without which the existence or the change could not have been. It is universally admitted that we have no knowledge of any existence, or any change which has taken place without a cause. The human mind, under whatever circumstances of culture or neglect, has acknowledged in the clearest manner, and in every way of which the subject is susceptible, the inseparable nature of this connexion. We learn it from experience, and in two ways—by the testimony of our senses, and by the inspection of our own minds. We cannot realize the fact, that existence or change can take place without a cause. The man who begins by denying what is so self-evident, discovers an incapacity to reason. He holds nothing in common with the rest of mankind, and no absurdity can be greater than to attempt to argue with him. Indeed he cannot pursue an argument on the subject without a practical refutation of the principle he assumes. In *speaking*, he exhibits *himself* as a cause of all the words uttered by him, and of the opinions he would communicate, and, in the act of arguing, admits you to be a similar

cause. If his body be not a cause, and your eyes another, you cannot see him;—if his voice and your ear be not causes, you cannot hear him;—if his mind and yours be not causes, you cannot understand him. In a word, without admitting the connexion between cause and effect, you can never know that he is arguing with you, or you with him. But the sophistry which leads to atheism denies this first principle of all reasoning, and betrays a mental perversion, which utterly disqualifies for sober and rational investigation. But the source of atheism is the heart rather than the head;—and it is a moral phenomenon of a most portentous and appalling character. It is the child of depravity, bearing all the worst features of its parent.

A tree is known by its fruits.

Reason never produced such a monster as atheism;—it is to be traced to the indisposition of the heart to acknowledge the existence of the Creator. He that hates the control and dreads the inspecting judgment and retribution of his Maker, finds no refuge from anxiety and alarm so safe as the belief that there is no God. To me there is something fearful and even terrific in the state of mind which can delight in the renunciation of the Deity, which can derive satisfaction from the feeling, that the infinite Spirit is gone, that the only solid foundation of virtue is wanting—which can enjoy pleasure in renouncing that system of doctrine of which a God is the great subject, and that train of affections and conduct of which he is the supreme object. The idea of a God seems essential to every pleasurable and sublime emotion;—without it we can conceive of nothing glorious, and nothing delightful. And could it once be exploded, in my view, it would diminish to insignificance the range of thought, and the circle of enjoyment. The absence of God would cover the face of nature with funereal gloom;—and he that should first make the fatal discovery, according to my apprehension, would be at once and for ever the most miserable being in the universe. He would evince no eagerness to communicate the dismal fact;—on the contrary, he would envy

his fellow-creatures the pleasant delusion which sustained their virtue and encouraged their hope.

Now we ask with confidence whether an individual who cannot discern that God exists, or that he requires and deserves any homage from his creatures, who knows not how to reason on the plainest facts, ought to be regarded as an oracle, when he approaches the *terra incognita* of a new order of things conjured out of his own imagination, the principles of which have never been submitted to the process of induction; which experience cannot explore, nor science illumine. What judgment are we to form of his understanding, who renounces faith to become the dupe of the most absolute credulity? For we fearlessly maintain that there is no absurdity which the human mind in the very spirit of extravagance has been capable of inventing, which the denier of a God has not made an article of his creed.

The dogmas of atheism are the most melancholy exhibition of weakness which has ever degraded the human understanding. Its eternal series—its spontaneous universe of worlds and beings, the result of motion and matter—and all produced and continued as they are by a physical necessity, to the utter exclusion of intelligence, and the moral perfections which infinite intelligence implies, have been unanswerably proved, not only to be false, but to be impossible. What then can we think of the mental capacity of him who goes quietly on with his faith in these hypotheses, and resolves to believe in defiance of demonstration and impossibility. But it is in his character of a philanthropist and a remodeller of the whole frame-work of society, that his principles necessarily operate to the destruction of his hopes.

We have already intimated that the co-operative system excludes all considerations of a Deity, as forming the human character—that it utterly abrogates all religion, and we may add, that while it degrades man from his high rank as a responsible being in the universe, it at the same time teaches him to believe that there is nothing greater than himself in

existence, and that he is formed for this world and no other. He is the creature of death—but he has no inheritance beyond the grave—and as he is to acquire no property, to rise to no distinction on earth, hopes and fears are to have no influence in restraining his passions or vices—his destiny is comprised within the narrow limits of threescore years and ten—and the character which he acquires in his passage to the tomb is not his own. It belongs to other influences for which he is irresponsible, and over which he has no control.

Now, my brethren, what estimate can we possibly form of a man who undertakes to govern the moral world without a God, who would form a moral character without motives, who would limit the existence of the human being to the present state, and who proposes to construct the whole fabric of society on the principle of such exclusion and limitation? With whatever professions he may approach us, must we not instantly shrink from him as the worst enemy of his species? If he could even banish all the evils from the world, which he ascribes to its tyrannical governments and anti-social institutions, if at the same time he annihilated the fear and the love of God, the dread of retribution, and the expectation of enjoying the divine favour after death, mankind would be infinite losers by the change, and might justly curse their benefactor, for procuring for them the temporal advantages of a perishing world, during a few fleeting years, at the expense of all that is ennobling to their intellectual, their moral and immortal nature. But this inversion of the order of Providence is impossible; you might as well expect the seasons to revolve, and the earth to bring forth all its wondrous and useful productions without the light and heat of the great luminary of day, as that man either in his individual or social capacity should possess happiness without piety—or piety without that sense of accountableness which springs from the conviction, that the principles, motives, and volitions which form his character are essentially his own, irrespective of all outward circumstances.

which can no further control his destiny than as he voluntarily yields himself up to their influence. In support of this very unqualified assertion, and we make it as broadly as the strength of human language will admit—we proceed to show that *The legitimate consequences of atheism are appalling and demoralizing impieties, and that the co-operative system, assuming atheism for its basis, is utterly opposed to the nature of man, and the very existence of society.*

Mr. Burke has profoundly remarked, "that man is by his nature and constitution a religious animal; that atheism is against not only our reason but our instincts, and cannot last long." This was written during the fury of the French revolution—when, as in one day, a whole nation threw off the restraints of religion, and avowed in the face of civilized Europe that they were a community of atheists. The prediction in the latter clause of the sentence was soon fulfilled. It is possible that some of the advocates of the scheme we are reprobating may endeavour to shield its author from the imputation of atheism—but to do this successfully is impossible—the grand pre-requisite to the application of his principles, is that the communities formed by him shall have no religion, no God. The French atheists have fully expressed what is necessarily implied in this preliminary stipulation. During the reign of Robespierre, the convention, in one of its most popular and authentic papers, makes the following announcement. "Provided the idea of a Supreme Being be nothing more than a philosophical abstraction, a guide to the imagination in the pursuit of causes and effects, a resting-place for the curiosity of inquiring minds, a notion merely speculative, and from which no practical consequences are to be applied to human life, there can be no great danger in such an idea; but if it is to be made the foundation of morality, if it is to be accompanied by the supposition that there exists a God, who presides over the affairs of the world, and rewards and punishes men for their actions on earth, according to some principle of speculative justice, there can be no opinion more prejudicial

to society." In these sentiments the supporters and author of the co-operative system perfectly concur. With respect to a belief in the being and moral government of God, one of their writers observes, "We attach no importance to the belief of doctrines that are inexplicable—as man does not form his own character, it is injustice and cruelty to visit him with punishment—even the robber has it not in his power to govern his own actions—the motives by which he is impelled have been produced by the circumstances under which he has been placed, acting upon his peculiar organization—and as this applies to all men without a single exception—on this principle the whole system of rewards and punishments must fall to the ground." Such is the moral philosophy on which the new scheme of renovating society is founded. Let us for a few moments examine it as a matter of reason, and trace the principle to its just consequences; and then, let us contemplate its actual operation in those cases where it has been brought to the test of experiment.

The only character under which man either is, or can be placed before us, according to this system, is that of a mere automaton, with a principle of what is called life superadded, which life however confers no moral power, but leaves its subject to be as necessarily impelled to action by the circumstances in which he is placed, as the puppet is moved by the springs and wires that compose its actuating machinery. This is an essential fundamental doctrine of atheistical materialism, and is inseparably connected with all its forms. This doctrine, Mirabaud, the atheistical oracle of the present day, has publicly avowed and defended. He unhesitatingly says, that "Every thing is necessary—that it cannot be otherwise, than it is—that all the beings we behold, as well as those which escape our sight, act by certain and invariable laws. In those terrible convulsions that sometimes agitate political societies, shake their foundations, and frequently produce the overthrow of an empire, there is not a single action, a single word, a single thought, a single will, a single

passion in the agents, whether they act as destroyers or victims, that is not the necessary result of the causes operating—that does not act as of necessity it must act, from the peculiar essence of the beings who give the impulse, and that of the agents who receive it, according to the situation these agents occupy in the moral whirlwind.” And he further adds, “Man’s life is a line that nature commands him to describe upon the surface of the earth, without his ever being able to swerve from it even for an instant. He is born without his own consent; his organization does in no way depend upon himself; his ideas come to him involuntarily; his habits are in the power of those who cause him to contract them; he is unceasingly modified by causes, whether visible or concealed, over which he has no control, which necessarily regulate his mode of existence, give the hue to his way of thinking, and determine his manner of acting! He is good or bad—happy or miserable—wise or foolish—reasonable or irrational, without his will going for any thing in these various states.” This is the doctrine which Mr. Owen has adopted and moulded into his system. The principle which he acknowledges has wrought all the evils and miseries which prevail in the present order of things, in his hands is to erect a new machinery productive only of virtue and felicity. But how is this to be achieved—whence is the intellectual and moral power to be derived, which is to battle with a blind and inexorable necessity, which acts without intelligence, and in defiance of every thing like moral government in the universe?

Can the principle which degrades man to the humblest possible level of intellectual existence at the same time illumine and expand his mind—can that which renders him unsusceptible of moral obligation elevate him to the dignity of virtue—can the doctrine which tells him that he is insulated in all his interests, and these the interests of a mere animal, that he is united to his fellow men only by time and chance, that he is born merely to breathe, to eat, to drink, to sleep, to propagate his kind and to die, without the

remotest apprehension of law or government, merit or reward, can such a doctrine dignify him with personal worth, inspire him with the love of rectitude, delight him with pleasurable emotions derived from the present, or the future, or the past, or produce in him any desire to promote the common good, the general happiness? Assuredly not. “Men do not gather grapes of thorns nor figs of thistles—the same fountain cannot send forth bitter waters and sweet.” Allow me to strengthen the position I have thus assumed by a quotation from one of our ablest writers on Christian theology:—“Personal worth is all dependent on the existence of laws and government formed by one who has a right to enact the former and administer the latter:—a right founded on the relations which he sustains to those who are under his government. To these relations also must the laws and the government be conformed in such a manner as that, and that only, shall be enacted which requires the conduct suited to these relations, and promotive of general and individual happiness. In the same manner must be directed the rewards, punishments, and administrations. But on the scheme which disavows the being, or that proscribes the recognition of a God, there is no such ruler and no such right to rule; there are no such relations, and no such duties. Rectitude, the sum of personal worth, consists in rendering voluntarily that which others have a right to claim; but on this scheme no claim can be founded and none exists. There is, therefore, nothing due; of course no duty can be performed and no rectitude experienced; hence that high, unceasing, and refined enjoyment which attends the sense of rectitude can never be found by the atheist.” Where rectitude or moral principle is discarded, nothing remains as the impelling principle and the guiding rule of human conduct but appetite and passion. And what must be the result?—Disorder, crime, and misery!—If this scheme be true, all men ought undoubtedly to be governed by it. What would become of such a world and of the atheist himself in the midst of such a

world? We may confidently ask, in what possible way can atheism secure the well-being of society. If we grant that the being of a Deity operates as a very slight restraint on vice, in individual cases, where the character has become utterly depraved, yet its general influence must be mighty, interwoven as it is with the whole civil and social economy of man. It must act powerfully as an incentive to good, and as a check to whatever is evil: and it can only fail in particular instances of atrocious obduracy.

But what offences against himself or his fellow-creatures, may not an atheist perpetrate with conscious impunity, without regret and without a blush? What protection can his principles afford to confiding innocence and beauty? What shall deter him from dooming an amiable and lovely wife to penury, to desolation, and an untimely grave? What shall make seduction and adultery criminal in his eyes, or induce him, when she is in his power, to spare the victim of unhallowed and guilty passion? What can he know of honour, of justice and integrity? What friend will he not betray—what enemy will he not pursue to utter destruction? What lawless gratification will he not indulge when its indulgence does not compromise his personal safety? Who, we may ask, are those that set the decencies of life at defiance, that laugh at virtue, and riot in epicurean debauchery? Are they not the base apostates from God who boast of their impiety, and write themselves atheists to their own disgrace and the scandal of the country that gave them birth.

From the specimens of atheists which the world has seen, some faint idea may be formed of what an atheistical community would soon become; soon would it be transformed into an image of hell; "and distrust, jealousy, wrath, revenge, murder, war and devastation overspread the earth. In the midst of millions the atheist would find himself in a desert. His situation would be that of a hermit, his character that of a fiend." But as the author of the new scheme of society is loud and violent in his condemnation of all existing governments and every system of civil polity which is esta-

blished, let us see how a government formed on his favourite principle of atheistical necessity, and intended to rule a people professing the same creed, would be found to conduct itself—what would be the character of the ruler and the governed in reference to each other and the relations subsisting between them? Dr. Dwight has furnished us with a dark but not overcharged portraiture. Under such an absence of all that would impose restraint on wickedness and under the active operation of all that can stimulate depravity, he observes, "Rulers would feel no sense of rectitude, possess no virtue and realize no moral obligation. To all these things their fundamental principles would be hostile, and would render the very thought of them ridiculous. God is the only acknowledged source of obligation, but to them there would be no God, and therefore no such obligation. Conformity to His laws is the only rectitude; but to these men there would be no such laws, and therefore no rectitude. Convenience of course, or in better words, passion and appetite, would dictate all the conduct of these rulers. The nature of a government directed by passion and appetite we know imperfectly by the histories of Caligula, Nero, and Heliogabalus, and more thoroughly, though still imperfectly, in those of Danton, Murat, Robespierre, and their associates. Who would be willing to see such a tissue of madness, cruelty, misery, and horror woven again?"

"The subjects of such a government would at the same time lie in the same manner under the influence of the same doctrine. Their conduct would accordingly be an exact counterpart to that of their rulers. Appetite would change every man into a swine, and passion into a tiger. Right would neither be acknowledged, nor be felt, nor exist. Whatever was coveted would be sought and obtained, could it be done with safety. Whatever was hated would, so far as safety would permit, be hunted and destroyed; to deceive, to overreach, to betray, to maim, to torture, and to butcher, would be the common employment and the common sport. The dearest and most

venerable relations would be violated by incestuous pollution; and children, such of them I mean as were not cast under a hedge, thrown into the sea, or dashed against the stones, would grow up without a home, without a parent, without a friend. The world would become one vast den, one immeasurable sty, and the swine and the wolf would be degraded by a comparison with its inhabitants."

Such, my brethren, is the reasoning, fair and conclusive, from principles to their legitimate consequences. But we come now to a fearful practical illustration of this reasoning. As if to silence infidelity for ever, and to stamp upon it the brand of everlasting execration; the Governor of the world, in his inscrutable wisdom, was pleased to permit the most polished and refined among the civilized nations of the earth to reduce atheism to practice, to bring its principles to bear upon the social state, and to exhibit the tremendous result. In mercy, however, he limited its duration—for a short season only was it suffered to perform its dreadful tragedies. It soon destroyed itself, while it displayed before the universe its scroll of blood, on which was written lamentation, and mourning, and woe! Atheistical philosophers seized the power of legislation and government; they talked of the perfectibility of man, and promised to their deluded votaries a golden age for them and their regenerated species. The pledge was given, and fairy scenes were delineated with all the glow of an excited imagination—another paradise bloomed. The human race, freed from tyranny, oppression, and crime, were described not merely as innocent, but virtuous and immortal. But how was all this realized? I must again borrow the pencil of truth. Atheism, under a co-operative system, began its career—the experiment was tried, and we have the result before us, as a warning and a calamity the most fearful that the offended Majesty of heaven could in mercy and in vengeance give and inflict.

Dr. Dwight has eloquently observed, "the only instance in which infidels of any description have possessed the supreme power and government of a country,

and have attempted to dispose of human happiness according to their own doctrines and wishes, is that of *France*, since the beginning of the revolution. If we consider this government as established over a nation, educated for ages to the belief and obedience of many doctrines of Christianity, and retaining, as to a great majority of the people, the habits formed by that education, the state of that nation will evince beyond a question, that all which I have said is true without exaggeration.

"*France* during this period has been a theatre of crimes, which, after all preceding perpetrations, have excited in the mind of every spectator, amazement and horror. The miseries, suffered by that single nation, have changed all the histories of the preceding sufferings of mankind into idle tales, and have been enhanced and multiplied, without a precedent, without number, and without a name. The kingdom appeared to be changed into one great prison; the inhabitants converted into felons; and the common doom of man commuted, for the violence of the sword and the bayonet, the sucking boat and the guillotine. To contemplative men, it seemed for a season as if the knell of the whole nation was tolled, and the world summoned to its execution and its funeral. Within the short space of ten years, not less than three millions of human beings are supposed to have perished in that single country by the influence of atheism. Were the world to adopt and be governed by the doctrines of *France*, what crimes would not mankind perpetrate? what agonies would they not suffer?"

After this, will such men as Mr. Owen and his coadjutors ever efface the impression from our minds, that atheism, whatever disguise it may assume, is an inhuman, a bloody and ferocious system, equally hostile to every useful restraint and to every virtuous affection; leaving nothing above us to excite fear, or around us to awaken tenderness, it wages war with heaven and with earth. Its first object is to dethrone God; its next to destroy man. With such conviction, the enlightened and virtuous inhabitants of

Great Britain, and you, my brethren, the very sinews and strength of your native land, will not surely be tempted to your fate by the rhapsodies of men, without religion, and without a God.

Mr. Owen tells you, that the remedy of all your ills is co-operation, as opposed to competition. Co-operate by all means; but on principles true to your nature, your interests, and your happiness—let Christianity be cordially received—welcome its blessings to your hearts—place yourselves under its wholesome regimen—be a community of Christians, and when all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest, there will be nothing to hurt nor to destroy—"the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the ewe and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den."

The being and perfections of God, as the moral Governor of the world, are the foundation of this glorious system of truth, of righteousness and mercy.

*Let us draw a hasty sketch of its tendency to ameliorate the human condition, as it is applicable to the present state of the human family.*

Your time is gone, and your attention is wearied, and on this part of the subject I must, for my own sake and yours, be brief. This I should regret, if in looking over the syllabus of lectures, I did not perceive, that this topic must be again discussed, under another aspect indeed, but in such a form as to fill up my outline and supply my deficiencies.

My brethren, the idea best suited to the glorious faculties of the human mind, and which can it most worthily cherish, is the idea of a Deity, which, unlike every other with which we are familiar, is capable of continual expansion, enlarges with our intellectual powers, ranges through all space, stretches beyond all limited duration, and which, to use the words of an eloquent Christian orator, borrows

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splendour from all that is fair, subordinates to itself all that is great, and sits enthroned on the riches of the universe. This idea, illustrated and explained in an infinite variety of forms in nature, is augmented with a moral grandeur, and shines with an infinite glory in the pages of divine revelation.

In both it is brought home to our hearts with irresistible power; and produces a character in those who sincerely entertain it in some humble measure, resembling the perfections of the Great Being who is its original archetype. His natural attributes, such as eternity, spirituality, omnipotence, wisdom, omnipresence, and infinite goodness, inspire adoration and furnish all the elements of a sublime and elevated piety; while the impressive manifestation of his moral excellencies, his holiness, rectitude, truth, and mercy, as the Governor and Saviour of the world, operates to the production of principles which renovate, dignify, and exalt the human being, placing him under an influence which supplies his understanding with the most valuable knowledge—his conscience with the most delicate sensibility—his will with the purest and mightiest motives—his affections with the noblest objects—and his whole sphere of existence with duty and enjoyment.

On the principle that "the character is formed for the individual and not by him, man must indeed become the creature of necessity, and thus what may be properly termed influence as opposed to this necessity, is entirely foreign to his nature. But on the Christian principle, that every character involves personal responsibility in its formation, the idea of a moral influence instilling its motives, impressing its features, and controlling its destiny is most welcome to the heart; and this moral influence is exerted with a perpetual energy on the individual who cordially receives and reverentially adores Being of infinite perfection and glory—his Creator—his Governor—his Sanctifier—his God. The character rises and is sustained under his transforming influence. The struggles against temptation, sin, and folly, in the vale of tears, become successful, because they are

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animated by the inspecting eye of the Divinity; and the feeble creature, armed with the omnipotence of heaven, is more than a conqueror. Mighty are the triumphs of principle over passion, and of piety over the world. What a powerful check to vice is likewise furnished by the consciousness in the bosom of the sinner, that there is an Almighty Judge, from whose presence he cannot hide himself—a Being that surrounds his path and is acquainted with all his ways? Let this impression be once felt, and the pleasures of vice lose all their captivating charms, the heart sickens at temptation. "God is here," irradiates the darkness of the night, tears off the cowl of secret villainy in the face of day, and so alarms the conscience, that imagined crimes are destroyed in embryo.

*But it is the influence of these sublime sentiments upon society, upon man, in his state of civil compact and association, that displays, by matchless contrast, the degrading and demoralizing character of atheism.*

We have shuddered as we have viewed the scene of guilt and desolation opened to us by this foul spirit, the dark and final abyss of sin and ruin, where no solitary virtue gleams, where no ray of hope or comfort trembles through the profound midnight; let us, now, though but for a moment, refresh the wearied sight by glancing over the moral world, on which the "Sun of Righteousness" for ever shines with healing in his wings. Here, at the head of the vast chain of moral being, reaching like Jacob's ladder from earth to heaven, sits on the throne of infinite dominion, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the God of all who, like them, believe, worship, and obey their Creator. In Him, the self-existent and infinite mind, the Christian beholds, unceasingly, an object of boundless sublimity, grandeur, beauty, and loveliness; commanding by the disclosure of his character, and exhausting, all finite admiration, complacency, love, and praise; expanding every view, refining every affection, and ennobling every attribute. From the immediate contemplation of this glorious Being, raised to a superiority and distinction, of which

he could otherwise have never conceived, he casts his eyes abroad into the universe, which that Being has created. There he beholds an endless train of intelligent minds, reflecting with no unhappy lustre the beauty and glory of their Maker. From the pre-eminent dignity of the archangel, through the glowing zeal of the seraph, and the milder wisdom of the cherub; through the high endowments of Moses, Isaiah, and Paul, down to the humble but virtuous inhabitant of a cottage, one spirit lives, and breathes, and actuates in all, and that spirit is divine. Each wears, and exhibits, in his own manner, and that manner a delightful and useful one, the image and beauty of Jehovah. All, though of different magnitudes, diffuse a real light; all are stars, though one star different from another in glory. All are the subjects of virtuous affections; all are fitted to admire and adore, to glorify and enjoy their Creator; all are formed, and disposed voluntarily, to fill up their existence of doing good, with promoting individual enjoyment, and increasing universal happiness; all are bound together as children of one God, and brethren of each other, by love, the bond of perfection. Every one, therefore, is lovely in the sight of his Maker.

To this universe of minds the Christian believes, that the Creator, who is of course the rightful lawgiver, has given laws for the direction of its members, which require perfect conduct, and ensure to it perfect happiness. These laws extend to all the thoughts, words, and actions alike, and regulate each with unerring propriety. Their obligation is, and is acknowledged to be, divine; nothing can sunder, nothing can lessen it. This, instead of being a source of regret to him, is his delight; for what these laws require is better than any thing else; and more fraught with self-approbation, worth, and enjoyment. Of course, in all the relations and situations in life, as a parent or a child, a neighbour or a friend, a magistrate or a subject, he feels himself, on the one hand, irresistibly obliged, and, on the other, entirely delighted, to obey their dictates.

As these dictates reach every moral

being, in every situation, and with respect to every action, they provide, of course, and universally, for that conduct, in every being which is commendable and desirable. Here an immoveable foundation is laid for peace within, for dignity of mind, for real and enduring enjoyment, in the recesses of solitude, and for the endless train of duties and blessings, necessary to the happiness of society. A ruler, formed in this manner, will govern only to bless. "Subjects of the same character will obey, because rectitude demands their obedience, and because their obedience will ensure the happiness both of themselves and their rulers."\* If it be objected to this vision, that it belongs only to the imagination, and has never been realized, we beg to observe, that to affect all this is the immediate tendency of the system, that amidst ten thousand counteracting influences, it has achieved the greatest good to society; that it is a moral system, and that just in proportion as it has ever prevailed, have been the number and magnitude of the evils it has banished, and the benefits it has conferred. Wherever it has been truly welcomed, it has produced unmingled good; human depravity and guilt, whenever they have triumphed, they have triumphed in spite of it, amidst its remonstrances and determined hostility. In fact, it is the only antagonist of evil in the moral world; while infidelity is its patron, its principle, its soul and energy.

A people, rising in their intellectual character, and at the moment when they are making their transit from ignorance to knowledge, and from the degradation of brutes to the dignity of thinking beings, are peculiarly exposed to intellectual delusions, to fallacious theories and ruinous seductions, from the paths of truth and happiness; and their greatest danger is to be apprehended from the dazzling splendours of perverted genius, and the wild dogmas of spurious philanthropy.

Both these insidious spirits are at this moment at work among our people, watching every dawn of mind, that they may obscure it with the discolorations

\*Dwight.

of error and prejudice, and associate it with the evil powers that are at war with the best interests of man. We cannot use, we cannot invent terms sufficiently strong by which to express our indignation at the prostitution of genius. The talents of an atheistical and profligate writer, if they are of the first order, will no doubt ensure to him a species of immortality; but who would covet it? Who that is not lost to every sentiment of moral dignity would not deprecate it as a dire misfortune? To occupy through all time the bad eminence which vice assigns to her most powerful agents, to be the oracle of every impious wiling who is unable of himself to construct a sophism against religion; to be the text book of quotation to the impure of both sexes, who would throw a splendid refinement over their debaucheries; to stimulate the already too precocious depravity of youth, and the prurient lasciviousness of anticipated decrepitude; instead of brightening the heavens as a star, to fall upon the earth, to be in reality only a putrescent mass of shining corruption, emitting a pestiferous lustre, and then to perish for ever! These are the exclusive triumphs of prostituted genius, this its fearful destiny.

"I'd rather be the wretch that scrawls  
Its idiot nonsense on the walls;  
The gallant bark of reason wreck'd,  
A poor quench'd ray of intellect;  
With slabber'd chin and rayless eye,  
And mind of mere inanity;  
Not quite a man, nor quite a brute,  
Than I would basely prostitute  
My powers to serve the cause of vice,  
To build some jewell'd edifice;  
So fair, so foul,—framed with such art,  
To please the eye and taint the heart;  
That he who has not power to shun,  
Comes, looks, and feels himself undone."

But the spurious philanthropists, these are the most powerful coadjutors of the theoretic infidel. They bring out his principles into active life. True philanthropy aims at amelioration, not destruction; it does not dazzle with the promise of a distant visionary good that is to be purchased by anarchy, massacre, and the ruin of a whole generation of human

beings; but it applies the remedies of principle; it does good in its immediate sphere, and extends that sphere simply by the moral expansion of its usefulness.

Be not deceived, my brethren, when the enemies of your God, and the constitution of your country, approach you with expressions of affected concern for the well-being of society. Think not that they are tender hearted, because they have nothing but *douce humanité* in their mouth. Even the assassins and butchers of the French revolution, and the very worst of them too, could talk in raptures of restoring parents to their children, and children to their parents, relations to each other, and man to society. "I ever suspect," says one who belonged to their school, and who is very probably an atheist, "I ever suspect the sincerity of a man whose discourse abounds in expressions of universal philanthropy." Nothing is easier than for a person of some imagination to raise himself to a swell of sentiment without the aid of one single feeling in the heart. Rousseau, for instance, is ever babbling about his *genre humain*, his human race, and his *cœur aimant et tendre*, tender and loving heart; he writes for the human race, his heart bleeds for the distresses of the human race, and in the midst of all this he sends his unfortunate children to the poor house, the receptacle of misery.

In the instance of our modern martyrs to humanity, who encounter reproach and ridicule, opposition and scorn, and all for the good of mankind—whose laws they would abrogate—whose monarchs they would dethrone—whose intellect they would extinguish—and whose accountability they would destroy: what has all their boasting come to, and what are the results of their exertions? Let Lanark speak—rather let the report of the

parliamentary commissioners be seriously pondered. Of all the manufacturing districts which they had visited during a season of unexampled distress, Lanark was the most demoralized and the most wretched. The unhappy co-operatives had gained nothing by their compact but a community of unsatiated appetites, excited passions, disappointed hopes, and a reckless disregard of the future.

These practical lessons, I trust, will not be lost upon our people, who, instead of hunting after novelties and yielding to the seducing spirit of the age, will *stand in the way and ask for the old paths*, where is the good way, *and walk therein*, and thus *find rest to their souls*.

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#### THE MINISTRY A DIGNIFIED CALLING.

WHEN the celebrated George Herbert informed a court friend with his resolution to enter into sacred orders, he endeavoured to dissuade him from it, as too mean an employment, and too much below his birth, and the excellent abilities and endowments of his mind. To whom he replied,—It hath been formerly judged that the domestic servants of the King of heaven should be of the noblest families on earth. And though the iniquity of the late times have made clergymen meanly valued, and the sacred name of priest contemptible; yet I will labour to make it honourable, by consecrating all my learning, and all my poor abilities, to advance the glory of that God that gave them, knowing that I can never do too much for him, that hath done so much for me, as to make me a Christian. And I will labour to be like my Saviour, by making humility lovely in the eyes of all men, and by following the merciful and meek example of my dear Jesus.—*Isaac Walton.*

## SERMON XXXI.

### ON THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD.

PREACHED

BY THE VERY REV. G. H. BAIRD, D.D.,

PRINCIPAL OF THE UNIVERSITY, AND SENIOR MINISTER OF THE HIGH CHURCH, EDINBURGH.

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*"When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."*  
Isaiah xxi. 9.

I BEGIN, my friends, with remarking that by the term "judgments of God" the Scriptures sometimes denote the decisions, whether favourable or adverse, which God passes upon the conduct of men. But more frequently this phrase is employed to denote the effect of such decisions, when they are unfavourable—to denote those remarkable punishments by which the Almighty chastises the wickedness of guilty individuals, and the crimes of guilty nations. In the course of God's providential procedure we often see his judgments; we see misfortune and distress following so closely and visibly the conduct of men, that we can have no doubt whatever concerning the connexion that, by his appointment, subsists between them. Thus when poverty, like an armed man, rusheth on the prodigal—when a failing of eyes, and trembling of joints, and rottenness of bones afflict the sensualist—when a dissolution of all the moral bonds that uphold governments sweeps from a once high place among the nations an ungodly, and profligate, and effeminate people, we see in such cases an obvious relation between sin and punishment—between the sin and the judgment of God passed against it. They are connected as cause and effect by the original constitution which the Almighty has imposed on man, and on the world in which man is placed, and where he acts; and we feel no surprise when we see

these accompanying one another—the sin and the punishment.

But, my friends, there are many cases where the precise object of the divine visitation is unknown and invisible to us. In many cases the Lord holdeth back his face in his dealings with his creatures, and spreadeth a cloud of darkness over it: men behold the effects only of his interposition, without perceiving the particular end for which these visitations were produced. For instance, in the material world we sometimes witness famine, and the raging tempest, consuming all and blasting the hopes of men—and so it is to this day in our land. At other times we behold a terrible pestilence thinning, by its ravages, the numbers of the people. And in the establishments of social life, too, do we not often see deep distress brought on the inhabitants of whole kingdoms through political revolutions and war? Now, we know from the Scriptures, and the suggestions of our own hearts, that these also are the scourges of nations in the hands of the Almighty. We are at the same time but seldom able to point out the individuals whose sin these judgments were sent more immediately to punish. The individual sufferers, like the eighteen men upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, are often not more guilty than other people. Let it not, however, be overlooked, that the promiscuous calamities which happen to men, if they

do not come as punishments, come in divine wisdom as salutary general warnings, or as improving tests and trials of their faith, or as exercises of their fortitude and patience. In all such cases it would, therefore, be rash and uncharitable to interpret particularly, and with reference to individuals, the views of divine judgment when affecting a multitude. It is enough for us to know that these judgments, whatever be their kind, whatever be their nature, or whatever their degree, are instruments of God's government of his moral and rational offspring, and that the inhabitants of the earth may learn from them lessons of righteousness. This is the view, you will remark, in which the text represents the judgments of God to our consideration; and, therefore, in conformity with the pious purpose for which we are assembled this day, I shall endeavour to suggest, briefly, two of the righteous lessons which the judgments of God ought to teach us.

In the first place, the judgments of God, whatever their form, and whatever their degree may be, when they are contemplated by an enlightened and devout mind, are found powerfully to excite within it sentiments of warm piety and deep devotion toward that God from whom these judgments proceed. My friends, that God continues to govern the world which he has made, and that his rational subjects owe to him reverence and obedience, are truths which scarcely admit of doubt. God has impressed so visibly on all his works the signature of that unceasing care which he exercises for their preservation, that we have only to open our eyes on his works and behold it. When we look up to the heavens which his fingers have framed—when we see the sun, and the moon, and the stars observing order and regularity in all their movements, we are at once convinced of the powerful superintendence and energy of their Creator;—and when we turn our view to this earth, we meet every where indications of a similar kind. It is by the energies of his hand that all the things of this world are maintained, each of them in their due season and proportion, and it is upon him they depend for the wonder-

ful maintenance of their condition. But, above all, we can trace the watchful providence of God in the history of our race—we can trace the watchful providence of God communicating to man, at his first formation, the instincts and powers required for the new condition he was to fill—we can trace the watchful providence of God mingling men in society, and adjusting their talents to the situation which each of them has been destined to fill in it—and, through a most complicated series of arrangements, we can see the watchful providence of God rendering men, in their respective spheres, the instruments of promoting the destined and ultimate perfection of our race.

Now, to a man capable of reflecting on these marks of divine government, the Almighty surely presents an object most worthy of unbounded veneration—a Being whose mercies in all things are conspicuous, and who has an unquestionable title to receive from his rational creatures the worship and homage which he requires. But, alas! my brethren, while things observe their ordinary course, how seldom do we permit our thoughts to rise from them to the power by which they are conducted? Alas! alas! the beauty and benignity which our Father in heaven has spread around us in the world, where he has given us our situation, detain our attention on ourselves, without suggesting the source from which they flow. Nay, that very order, that very regularity which is the effect of his present power and care, lulls our mind asleep, and renders us insensible to the workings of his hand. It is, in truth, only when the general order of events seems to be sensibly interrupted—it is only when the elements composing the world and the frame of divine government seem to jostle, as it were, against each other—it is only when the pillars that support the society of men are suddenly shaken or broken down—or when some public or personal misfortune crosses the path of life, that the thoughtless multitude—and, alas! are we not all to be considered too much members of the thoughtless multitude?—arise to reflection, and feel the presence of their God.

My friends, there are various principles in our constitution, by which the judgments of heaven contribute to a salutary effect upon the minds of a thoughtless world. Unexpected revolutions, either in the natural or moral world, naturally arrest our attention. They demonstrate, in the most sensible manner, to our consciences our own weakness, and the incompetency of our powers either to produce or control the changing events around us; and to every mind that is not totally enfeebled and darkened through corruption, such revolutions suggest with irresistible force the notion of a powerful Supreme Ruler, they alarm our fears at his displays, and awaken all those sentiments—(this is at least their natural tendency, or ought to be their constant effect)—of humility and penitence which form the beginning of a pious and devout temper. And I would especially call your attention to this view of the case, that we learn from Scripture that this is not only the tendency of the divine judgments when rightly improved, but often the very purpose for which they were sent by the providence of God. The early record of Moses proclaims, repeatedly, that strange punishments came upon the disobedient. And why? That the people may hear, and feel, and do no more their iniquities. The plagues were sent upon Egypt that the Egyptians might know that God is the Lord. When Sennacherib was pursuing his severe conquests, and wickedly railing against the God of Israel, an angel of the Lord slew in one night a hundred and fourscore and five thousand men. And why? It was that all the kingdoms of the earth might know that he is the Lord God, even he alone! And the psalmist in express terms asserts the general proposition, that God maketh himself known by the judgments which he executeth, and snareth the wicked in the work of his own hands.

If, then, my beloved Christian friends, the judgments of God be both fitted and designed to awaken us to the ways of his providence, how should we labour to regard and improve them! Never let it be forgotten that the prevalence of these

judgments is a means of moral reformation for which we are accountable. They are chastisements which, after all gentler methods have failed, our gracious Father, desirous of our reformation and eternal safety, employs, and employs reluctantly, as the last efforts to recall us to the paths of obedience. And if we return not—if we still harden our hearts more and more, what must be the consequence! You all know what must be the consequence. This consequence may follow, and follow most certainly under the divine government it will, that our wickedness must be avenged by signal calamity. The denunciations made by the mouth of Isaiah must come: This “people turn not to him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts. Therefore the Lord will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day; for through the wrath of the Lord of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother.” (Isaiah ix. 13, 14, 19.)

From these remarks, my friends, it will appear that the divine judgments have as their first and general purpose, whatever their kind and form may be, to rouse the attention of sinners to the proofs of divine government, and to recall them, before it be too late, from their sleep of inconsideration, and from the criminal practices of irreligion and vice. These purposes of the divine judgments which we have affirmed in so many portions of Scripture, and which so heavily afflict our land, let us carefully improve. Let us remember that, amid the calamity that is committing its ravages among our brethren, all is the doing of the Lord; and considering that, let us then, with habitual and awful reverence, bow before him in submission to his will.

But, my brethren, the judgment which has, by the divine permission, visited our land, and which has this day brought us, professing humiliation, to the house of prayer—a judgment as appalling in its effects as it is novel in its circumstances—not only powerfully impresses the general lesson of righteousness, which all the divine judgments are calculated to do,

but with a fatal and a loud voice reminds us, in the second place, of this other peculiar lesson, the uncertainty of life, and the necessity and wisdom, therefore, of instant preparation for a Christian death of peace and hope. For, my friends, what judgment has ever taught so widely and so alarmingly the truth that we know not what a day or a night may bring forth?—What judgment has ever so terrified the land with the similitude of the psalmist—"thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, Return, ye children of men. Thou carriest them away as with a flood: they are as a sleep—in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth and groweth—in the evening it is cut down and withereth." Yes, my brethren, how many are the dwellings around us, where the inmates, healthy and light-hearted when the sun arose, have, ere the sun descended, given the dust to dust, and their spirit to God? Oh! how alarming to unprepared and sinful men is a fate like this! No time is there for review—no time for repentance—no time for making assurance of peace with God. Who prays not earnestly at this moment for himself from a fate like this—"O God, of thy good mercy save and deliver me." O, my brethren, confine not your feelings to a brief momentary prayer. Let them have a permanent and practical influence on your hearts and lives. The disastrous inroads of the pestilential malady into the bosom of our own city have hitherto been, through the divine forbearance in mercy, comparatively limited; but who will say that our dwellings—who will say that our persons are for the future secure? Signal benevolence has been manifested for averting the mischief by the opulence among us. No labour of love has been spared; and as to the professional members of the healing art, they have by their conduct most richly deserved the gratitude of their fellow-citizens, and have won for themselves indelible reputation. They have won it by the fearless exposure of their own persons to the perils of infection in the discharge of their hazardous duty, in their unwearied and watchful toils at the beds of the diseased and

the dying. Ye opulent—ye professional men, to whom I have now alluded—let not the unfounded and insane prejudices, as I must term them, of some ignorant and misguided individuals damp your ardour, or relax your efforts, in your god-like work of well-doing. All that are enlightened and generous approve and applaud; and even the ignorant will eventually feel shame, as they ought, for their uncharitableness and folly, while it is yours to enjoy, above all the praises of men, the gracious approbation of your consciences and your God.

But still, again the startling question recurs, under all that opulence and medical labour and skill have contributed to ward off the evil from our gates, are our houses, I ask again, are we ourselves for the future, with entire certainty, secure from the desolating disease, and that frightful rapidity with which it hurries its victim to the grave? Never let it be forgotten that opulence and medical skill are but secondary means and causes, and that their efficiency depends on the influential co-operation and blessing of our heavenly Father. Let, then, our devout, sincere, and ardent aspirations—let the devout, sincere, and ardent aspirations of every inhabitant of our city ascend to him—let us thrust our tears and supplications before the footstool of his throne, before the great Mediator, that he will be pleased still to be around us, and deliver us from our threatening dangers and troubles.

But then, my people, let me impress on every conscience and heart, if we hope for success to our supplications, that it is not enough that in a momentary feeling of devoutness we lift our hearts to the throne of the Most High, but we must carefully add to our supplications the acceptable incense of penitent hearts and holy lives—for thus only, let us be assured, can our hope be on rational and safe grounds. What is the language of Britons here this day? If it has any meaning, it is that you believe in the great truth of the constant superintendence of God over human affairs;—if it has any meaning, it is that he, by the general tenor of his laws, manifests favour to the godly; but that he does, and ever

will, by the unchanging principles of his government, reward the evil according to his iniquities. If the language of Britons has any meaning, it is that you are conscious of much evil-doing—that you deplore it in your own personal case; and that you resolve to cease from doing it hereafter—that you resolve to be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, which steadfastness and immovableness, and abounding in the work of the Lord, may justify your confessions here, and procure your acceptance in the day of final account.

Now, surely, never was there a louder call on Britons than there is this day, to adopt this language in the sanctuary, and in all their future conduct. Let all ranks among us, therefore, as the best preparation for stopping this calamity—as the best preparation for that death which, if not this calamity, some other cause will speedily bring upon us all—let men all repent and reform—let men of every rank consult this book of God, which explains so clearly, and which alone can explain with authority, because it bears the stamp of divine religion—let all consult this book, and learn what the terms are on which God is willing to forgive the sinner—what the terms are on which they can receive the assurance in their minds of their being heirs of that salvation which the Redeemer came to accomplish. They will find that there is only one way in which the sinner can hope for forgiveness. It was said to a person of high rank that there is no royal road to any particular science. So in the chair of truth, the teacher of religion is called on to tell the people that there is no privileged road to heaven—that there is no peculiar road by which the high may reach it to the exclusion of the poor—no peculiar road by which the poor may reach it to the exclusion of the high—“Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life;” but there is but one gate, and one way, through which every living soul must rise to heaven—if to heaven he rise at all—and that is through faith in Jesus Christ, and through that holiness which follows that faith—if that faith is genuine. Let all ranks, then, from the

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highest to the lowest, learn this precious truth from the book of God. Believe in Christ, and believe in him with the heart unto righteousness. This is the effectual way to be taken by every individual who wishes to obtain the diminution of the divine judgment now ravaging our land—by every individual who wishes to obtain for himself a ground of peace in the prospect of that death which its approach may bring to him, but which, at all events, must soon come to him. Let it be the business of all men to consider what faith is—to beseech the grace of God to bestow it, and to enable them to follow after holiness, without which they can never please nor see God.

My brethren, these are the means—the cherishings and actings of faith—these are the means by which you may make yourselves, as I have said, instruments of good to the public, and by which you may make yourselves ready for the hour in which the Son of man shall come.

Now, surely, any long detail or remark is unnecessary to convince you that for the hour of the Son of man coming, the most important duty which a mortal has to discharge, is in the command to make himself ready. O, my brethren, how delightful will it be to you—how delightful will it be to the friends that may surround your dying couch, if you shall be one of those sainted men who, having been tried with tribulation, tried to the end of your earthly career by the world and seduction, shall be ready, at the call of your God, to resign its enjoyments, and, standing on the verge of eternity, shall be solaced with a conscience void of offence, when reflecting on the past, and refreshed with the prospect of an everlasting kingdom in the heavens! The ministers of religion are called to furnish consolation to the dying, and they see them in various conditions of character and feeling. But they will tell you that eye cannot behold a more sublime, or more instructing, or edifying spectacle than the deathbed of a good man—full of humble confidence in God—rejoicing in the approbation of his own heart—triumphing over the fears of the grave—and singing, when he thinks himself standing on its very verge, “I am



now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing."

My dear friends, if this dignified termination of our earthly trials be an object we desire to gain—if the state of our souls at death shall decide our eternal fate—if the hour of our departure from time shall be the hour of our passage to happiness or misery everlasting, I put it to your understanding, if you will reflect, how carefully, how intensely, how incessantly, we should prepare for its approach. Because we do not see it, we are apt to flatter ourselves that it is far distant. But need I tell you, my mortal brethren, that you were born to die? If, at this solemn moment, a heavenly messenger should descend from the sky, and announce the time of your departure, as to an ancient was done—thy sickness shall be unto death—this week shall be thy last week on earth—even this night thy soul shall be required of thee—who among you would be ready for this message of terror? Alas! what tears of affliction would run down our cheeks at the remembrance of our sins—what prayers we would give for a short prolongation of our trials—what thoughts would we have of those we left behind—what solicitude would be felt to finish our work of sanctification! But is an angel from heaven necessary to tell us that we are mortal—that our appointed days are few? As for the days that are gone, and the ages that are past, what has become of the multitude that filled them? Let us look around in quest of those in our own time—let us look

around us in quest of those whom but a few moments we saw with delight on the stage of life, the companions of our youth, the friends of our bosom, the children perhaps whom nature designed to be props of our declining years, whither have they gone? A voice from their grave pierces the heart of the thinking soul, and calls on us all to be ready to follow them. Listen, then, to this warning voice. It accords with the dictates of universal experience—every change in our condition reminds us of its truth—infirmities, as they draw upon us, tell that the hour of our departure cometh. In this, the day of a merciful visitation—in this, our present escape from the dreadful malady, let us attend to the things that belong to our peace—let us cherish the dispositions, and hopes, and habits, the remembrance of which may cheer our departed spirits—let us learn lessons of righteousness from the judgments of God—let us lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, and then when our Lord comes, whether he come in the first watch or in the second—whether this day or to-morrow—whether in the hour of our worship or in the hour of business—whether when we are asleep or awake—he will find us ready. No painful retrospect will disquiet our consciences—no anxious forebodings terrify our souls. If we lead the life of the righteous, we shall die their death—we shall depart like them, and be with them; and our works shall follow us unto the habitation of our heavenly Father.

I only add, and let all join in the prayer—Do thou, O God, to whom belong the issues of life—do thou stand by us in our dying moments—support our feeble limbs in their passage through the dark valley, and receive them into their everlasting rest, for Christ's sake. Amen.

## SERMON XXXII.

### THE TESTIMONY OF THE SPIRIT.

BY THE LATE REV. RICHARD WATSON.

*"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."—Rom. viii. 15, 16.*

You are most of you familiar with the argument of the apostle in the preceding chapters of this epistle—an argument of the utmost importance, and which affects the great foundations of our faith—which carries all that there is of established and confirmed doctrine in the gospel into actual and personal experience. He proved that *all the world* were guilty before God—that Jew and Gentile, differing as they did in religious principles, in this respect stood on the same ground—that *every mouth is stopped*; there can be no justification, no palliation, no boasting; every mouth is stopped, and the whole world is guilty before God. And if guilty, then *under condemnation*, under the penalty of the law, under the penalty of death, liable to an eternal separation from God and happiness.

The next step which the apostle takes is to show that the law of Moses, as a particular revelation of law, as a moral law, furnished no means of justification before God. This he proves from one great principle, which is exceedingly obvious, that by the law is the knowledge of sin; and, therefore, the office of the law as to the guilty is to give them the knowledge of sin, to convict them of it, and to show the penalty to which they are exposed. How, then, can justification come from the law? Its sole office as to the guilty is to give them heart-rending knowledge of sin, and to reveal the conviction of this to all eternity. But, it may be said, there are a number

of persons exceedingly serious in their disposition, concerned as to their state, making the strongest efforts to please God—what do you say of them? The apostle allows that; and he speaks in the first person, as if there had been a time when he was of that number—though that is not very clear—however, he speaks in the first person, and no doubt represents a class of persons. And he shows in the chapter preceding this, that even in this state of mind, when men are under the influence of the Spirit of God convinced of sin, the Spirit opening their eyes to discern the spirituality of the law, and inspiring them with the strongest distaste of sin, and earnest desire to be delivered from it—he shows that even in this state the law can do nothing for them—that it gives them the knowledge of their sin, and the knowledge of their sin only; and that, though man consents to the law that it is good, and strives to fulfil it, still he feels himself bound; he finds a principle of corruption in his flesh which obtains the victory over every resolution; and so, at last, after repeated struggles, he comes to the issue, and cries out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?"—acknowledging that the deliverance must come not from himself, but from without. Here, then, the gospel comes in: "I thank God, through Jesus Christ, my Lord," says the apostle, that he is delivered. And then he tells us, that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus—to those who

have fled to him, resting on him as their sacrifice—so believing as to be justified, and to be virtually united to him; there is no condemnation to them; the power of sin is broken, and they walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.

The apostle then goes on to speak of the great and glorious privileges of all true believers; and, among the rest, he introduces the one that is mentioned in the text—that they are not only reconciled to God—not only justified freely by his grace, and brought into this state of fellowship and friendship with him—but that they are certainly persuaded they are passed from death unto life; and that this is no matter of doubtful inference of their own, from premises which they may wrongly lay down, or an inference so conducted that they may be mistaken in it; but that God himself shows it them—that it is the office of the Holy Spirit of God, called in the text the Spirit of adoption—and that He it is who assures them of this glorious truth. This is the subject before us. I need not say it is one deeply interesting to us all; to know not only that our sins may be remitted, and that we may pass into the family of God; but to know that we may be graciously assured of it from God the Holy Spirit—that this assurance may be alive—that it may shed abroad its comforting and hallowing influences in our spirits continually—and that it shall be to us the blessed pledge and foretaste of the assurance we shall have of God's eternal favour, when we see him in his glory, and when he speaks to us even from his throne. The subject, then, is of importance to us. Let us attend to it—let us endeavour to mark its nature—let us earnestly press into the enjoyment of it, if we have not received it—and let us rejoice in the additional confirmation of our faith, if, by the blessing of God, we are now able to call him Father.

Let us, in the first place, offer a few EXPOSITORY REMARKS ON THE TERMS OF THE TEXT. This is necessary to prevent error and misconception.

The first term which needs explanation, is "*the Spirit of bondage*." What may the apostle mean by that? There are, indeed, some who tell us that he personi-

fies, so to speak, the genius of the law, and calls it the spirit of bondage; calls it so, because there was that, they tell us, in the law, which naturally produces a servile spirit—a servile dread of God—uneasiness with respect to the future—a want of confidence even in all their services. Brethren, I doubt that—I doubt the fact. When the apostle tells us that he was alive without the law—or quite alive in his own mind, before the law was brought home to him in its convincing energy, as revealed in its spiritual meaning by the Spirit of God, he was not the subject of this servility—not the subject of this bondage—not the subject of this fear; nor had any of the Pharisees who were unawakened. We have an instance of this in the case of the publican and Pharisee in the temple. The publican had the spirit of bondage indeed; but the Pharisee, pressing boldly forward, justified himself before God. It cannot, therefore, be the meaning that the spirit of bondage is the personification of the genius of the law, because all those who were under the law would thus have been affected by the bondage; and, since the Pharisees were the most anxious to obtain justification by the law, they would be most under the influence of this spirit, if, indeed, it were merely the personification of the genius of the law.

By the "*Spirit of bondage*" the apostle means the Holy Spirit—the Holy Spirit in his convincing operations; for it is his office to convince the world of sin. When he brings a man into that state, that he consents to the law that it is good—that he would do good, yet has his eyes open to discern all his defects, and groans under a weight and burden from which he cannot relieve himself, and under the power of a chain which he cannot break—and when he is brought into the state described by the apostle, and says, "*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me!*" then he has received the Spirit of bondage unto fear.

The next term is "*the Spirit of adoption*." Some suppose that this means the genius of the gospel personified, because there is something free, and liberal, and hopeful in the whole character of

Christianity—that the Spirit of adoption is the effect which this character of Christianity produces in men, allaying their fears and raising their hopes. But we can easily prove, brethren, that the apostle cannot mean the genius of the gospel by the expression, but the Holy Spirit himself; because, observe, in the next clause, “the Spirit itself,” or himself, or that same Spirit “beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God.” This is rendered more clear by the parallel passage in the epistle to the Galatians, “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth,” not the genius of the gospel, but “the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father.” If the Spirit of his Son is the Holy Spirit, then is the Spirit of adoption here mentioned the Holy Spirit of God, whose particular office is—after he has brought us under a sense of bondage, and made us sensible of the need of deliverance at the hand of Jesus Christ, to seek it from him—to give us, in some way or other, that blessed testimony and assurance of our adoption into the family of God—that we are the children of God. For this reason, and in reference to this particular office, he is called the Spirit of adoption.

The third term is “*Abba*,” which is interpreted “Father.” There may be some meaning in what many commentators say, that the reason why the term was used in the Syriac language, and then expressed in the Greek, was to intimate that Jew and Gentile were equally privileged to call God Father by the gospel—that there was no difference at all, but that whoever believed, whether Jew or Gentile, entered into this common privilege; and that the believing Gentile was as much a child of God as the believing Jew. However, there is more probably an allusion to the prohibition which was well known among the Jews and others, that no slave was allowed to call the master of the family *Abba*, Father; that was the language of a child, not a slave, and the apostle, therefore, represents this as the great privilege of Christians, that they are no longer servants, no longer slaves; in that condition you cannot call God Father. As the bond

slaves of sin, that is not the language for you; but the moment you believe in Christ, and become a child of God by faith in him, you may call him Father with unfaltering tongue. Since you have entered into the condition of children, you may use the language of filial confidence and filial fear.

It is worthy of notice that the apostle adds, “the Spirit of adoption *whereby* we cry *Abba*, Father,” intimating to us that it is impossible to call God Father with filial confidence, but by the Spirit of adoption. Whatever measure of the Spirit we may receive in any other character, it is only by the Spirit, as the Spirit of adoption, that we can call God Father. And it is necessary that we receive this Spirit to the existence of this filial confidence, and to the authorized use of this filial confidence.

Having made these remarks on the terms of the text, we may secondly consider THE OFFICE OF THE TWO WITNESSES MENTIONED IN THE TEXT. “*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit*”—not merely to our spirits, which it must do, but *along with* our spirits: that seems the proper interpretation. Thus we have two witnesses—the Holy Spirit of God, and our own spirit. It is important for us to mark the distinction, and to know the office of both.

Let us remark, in the first place, *the subject of their testimony*—it is “that we are the sons of God.” This testimony of the Spirit is not that we have been awakened to a sense of our fallen condition—that we have truly and heartily repented us of our sins—that a very considerable number of moral changes have taken place in our affections and desires—that in many respects we love that which we once hated, and hate that which we once loved. All these things do in effect take place, more or less, preparatory to a man’s justification before God. But then the office of the Spirit of adoption is not, let it be observed, to assure us of these various moral changes, and then to lead us to conclude that, because of these moral changes having taken place, we are the children of God; but the object of this testimony—the simple object of this

testimony of the Spirit, is to bear witness that we are the children of God—to give some witness to the great fact that we are the children of God.

Let us observe, in the next place, that *the Spirit is the only witness that can give direct evidence to this*. A competent witness, but the *only* competent witness. Our own spirits do not give evidence to this fact; it is the Spirit of God which exclusively gives direct evidence to it. So far as there is a direct testimony to the fact, our own spirits have nothing to do with it; they are not competent to depose upon it; that is confined to the Spirit of God. Let us only consider, in order to illustrate this, that the act of pardon takes place upon our believing in Christ. Whenever God accepts our faith—when-*ever* our faith is that which he requires of us, then is a man justified from all things; he is forgiven and admitted into the favour of God. But then, this is an act which passes in the mind of God. Who can be cognizant of that act? It is very true God might give us a special revelation of it; or he might commission an angel to assure us that our sins are all forgiven. But he has not pleased to do this; it is not his way to give a special revelation as to this fact; nor is it his method to send an angel to assure us of it. How then does man become acquainted with it? The text informs us: it is the office of the Spirit, who knows all things, and searches the deep things of God. The spirit of a man does not know the spirit of another man: we cannot search our own spirits. The Spirit of God, however, says the apostle, knoweth “the deep things of God.” And when this act of forgiveness takes place, in pursuance of his own benevolent will and the office which has been assigned to him in the great economy of our redemption, he hastens to renew, and becomes the Holy Ghost unto us. He only, therefore, can be cognizant of the fact whether or not the act of forgiveness has taken place. For the promises are *general*; our names are not written in these sacred pages: whether I have so believed as to come up to the requisitions of the gospel in this respect it is not for me to know; I have

no rule by which to judge of it. And when God accepts my faith, why then he forgives my sin; but he forgives it by the acting of his own mind, of which he makes no revelation to man. The method he has appointed by which it shall be conveyed to the heart of man for his comfort is this testimony of the Spirit.

How this testimony is revealed, or the manner in which it is to be communicated, is difficult to describe; and it is not at all necessary for us to be able to describe. There are various ways, probably, and various degrees of confidence, by which this great fact is communicated to man. However it be, whether it be by any impression, or by whatever name you may call it, it is that which amounts to a testimony, that which amounts to a witness, which puts away the doubt. For why is a witness called in, but to clear up some doubt? For what purpose do we bring witnesses but to come at the knowledge of some truth? Now, whatever be the means by which the Spirit may communicate the truth, the great thing is communicated—in ways, perhaps, somewhat different, but all coming from the same Spirit—some persuasion, some assurance, some conviction of the fact, that I am now, through the mercy of God in Christ, a child of God—that Christ has loved me, and given himself for me.

Then we have the *witness of our own spirits*. “The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit.” The Spirit of God alone can bear direct witness to the fact of our forgiveness and adoption: why, then, are our own spirits brought to bear testimony to that? Certain it is that where the Spirit of God is there can be no darkness; he makes himself manifest by his own light, as a voice which faithful souls cannot be deceived by. There can be no delusion where the Spirit of God renews; but there may be impressions which men may mistake for the impressions of the Spirit of God; and therefore, our own spirits should be a guard against a delusion of this sort: inasmuch as where the Spirit of God dwells as the Spirit of adoption he must necessarily dwell as the great Author of our regeneration—as the source of all holy

feelings and principles. These are inseparable the one from the other. Where the Spirit of God dwells he dwells with all his graces. When he comes and takes possession of a believer's heart, there he is also, and must necessarily be, as the Spirit of holiness. And our own spirits, conscious of these moral changes, of these holy principles and affections, come to the conclusion that we have received the Spirit of God. Now, the witness of our own spirits to the fact that we have received the Spirit of God—that those impressions of assurance which have given us so much comfort are not delusive, but are from the Spirit of God himself—the witness of our own spirits is a direct testimony to this fact; but only an indirect witness to the fact of our adoption. Thus we have a direct and an indirect witness.

In the third place, we proceed to consider a FEW ERRORS CONNECTED WITH THIS DOCTRINE. I trust it is clear to all that, upon our believing in Christ with a penitent heart, we are justified before God; that the knowledge of that great act of pardon of which only the Holy Ghost can take cognizance is communicated to us by the Spirit of testimony; and that from that springs up filial confidence, and the power to use filial language, and call God our Father. But there are some errors connected with this important doctrine that ought to be noticed.

The first is, that *there is no certainty of our being now in a state of salvation—that this is an unattainable blessing*. A great and unspeakable blessing it is acknowledged. For who can fail to acknowledge it an unspeakable blessing that a sinful man should look up to God with confidence—that he should be enabled to use such language as this—"O Lord, I will praise thee; though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid!"—that the man, unworthy as he is of the least of God's mercies, having the access of a child to the throne of the heavenly grace, may go with filial confidence, and ask, and receive whatever blessings he may need in time and eternity—that his

voice shall ever prevail—that whatever he shall ask he shall receive—and that he shall be encouraged to ask by the previous assurance that God his Father can deny him no good thing. These are great and unspeakable blessings, but not attainable, say they. Well, then, brethren, if they are not attainable, the state of good men under the New Testament dispensation is far inferior to the state of good men under the Old. And, if that be an absurdity, then the notion from which it springs cannot be held. It is no new thing in the world. The first man that ever offered a sacrifice in faith obtained the testimony, the witness, of his acceptance. Enoch walked with God, and was not, for God took him; and before he was translated he had this testimony—that he pleased God. Now, what was peculiar in the case of Enoch? He was a sinful man, like ourselves; and deserved as little at the hands of God. There is nothing in the experience of that man, or any of the great men mentioned in the Old Testament, but what may become (allowing for the particular circumstances of their case) substantially and generally, the experience of every man that has faith in God. Look at the character of Abraham; see the filial confidence that he had from the moment God counted his faith for righteousness. He was styled the friend of God; and every action of his life showed that he knew God was his friend. When David so affectingly prays in his penitential psalm, "Restore unto me the joys of thy salvation," did he not recollect joys of salvation previously experienced? Not, surely, a salvation which related to any outward deliverance; for the very nature of the psalm, and the circumstances under which it was composed, force us to conclude that the expression—"the joys of thy salvation," refers to that holy state of mind, and friendship with God, to which he had been previously introduced, and which thus spread so much joy through his spirit, arising from the assurance of his being an object of the divine favour. These were the joys that had been withered by his sin; and for the restoration and revival of these joys he

prayed. So many other passages show that this was the case with good men under the old dispensation. And if ours be a dispensation more glorious, and if we know that the Spirit of God has this particular office, and bears this particular character of the Spirit of adoption, we are not to conclude that we are placed inferior, but in superior circumstances, even, to the saints of the Old Testament dispensation, with respect to the comfortable assurance of our being now accepted.

We may say also that this notion, that no such assurance is attainable, is contrary to all the words of Christ and his apostles. We do not mean to say that the assurance may not be in a different degree. It may be accompanied with admixtures of doubt; it may be, in the first instance, far from being a strong assurance; but, in all its stages, it is that which gives comfort, and rest, and peace, to the soul. In all its degrees it enables man to call God Father. When our Lord says, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—can such words be reconciled with the idea of our being in a state of uncertainty as to whether we are accepted of God? Remember what that uncertainty implies—remember that it implies this—I am uncertain whether God be my friend or my enemy. I am uncertain whether his wrath abides upon me unmitigated by any merciful pardon; or whether he secretly regards me, though he has not manifested this, with compassion and kindness. It is matter of uncertainty whether I shall live through this day or not; therefore, it is matter of uncertainty whether I die under the curse of God, or under his smile—whether I am to be happy or miserable for ever. Uncertainty as to our acceptance with God implies all this; and is it possible, if the man be awakened, and the mind be serious, that, if this be the only state into which our religion brings us, mitigated by some degree of hope—is it possible that Christ himself can give us rest? "Come unto me, all ye that are weary," however, he says, "and I will give you rest." And the very idea of a spirit at rest, a spirit in a state of quiet repose, is

perfectly inconsistent with the idea that there shall be a doubt hanging over the fact whether I am accepted with God. Take all this—that it is impossible for us to attain such an assurance as shall give us a general degree of peace, and save our spirits from anxiety and fear. But then they tell us *there is a great danger of fanaticism if we teach the doctrine that this knowledge is communicated by the direct impression and impulse of God*; and therefore, it is much more safe to proceed in this way:—since, they tell us, God has said that as many persons are his children as bear certain characteristics, we must examine ourselves to discover whether these are found in us; and, if we find them in us, we may come to the conclusion that we are the children of God: and it is in this safe and rational way that we gain a comfortable persuasion of our being adopted into the family. Well; we allow all that is very plausible; but then, what are we to do with the text, and other texts? Men may make plausible theories; but are we bound to receive the Scriptures or not? And are we bound to interpret them fairly or not? I ask, what are we to do with the text on such a theory as this? The apostle speaks of the Spirit of God as the Spirit of adoption—what meaning has that? And then he tells us we have not received the Spirit of bondage unto fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father; and that the Spirit itself, that same Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, the Holy Spirit, bears testimony with our spirits, and to our spirits, that we are the children of God. That is the process by which we come to the knowledge of the fact. And what is it that you can invent another? What is it that you can conceive of another? I put it to you whether you are to form your religious opinions from Scripture, or by your own imaginations? Take that passage in the Galatians, "Because ye are sons"—because ye are adopted and accepted into the family of God—"God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Why, you cry Abba, Father, according to this theory, by virtue of your own discovery: it is your own

reasoning and inference that cry out in your spirit, Abba, Father. Will you take that voice of your own judgment, instead of the blessed voice of the Spirit of God in his character of the Spirit of adoption?

Let us go a little nearer this objection. There are certain fruits of the Spirit, it is said, by which we are to infer that we are the children of God. And what are these fruits? If you examine you will find that several are such fruits of the Spirit as must necessarily imply a previous persuasion communicated to us by God himself, and a previous persuasion of our being in the favour of God. We have a catalogue of these fruits, "The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law." "Love"—now you would say—this doctrine leads us to say—a man must examine whether he has love to God; "joy," whether he has joy in God; "meekness," whether he has got meekness; "goodness, fidelity, temperance," and if he has all these, he is to conclude that he is a child of God. Why, is it not most obvious to you that it is absurd to look for such a fruit of the Spirit as *love* to God our reconciled Father till we *know* him as our reconciled Father—or *peace*, till we know that we are at peace with him? Therefore these fruits of the Spirit are the fruits of the Spirit of adoption previously bestowed; and you cannot expect to find such fruits, and never will find them, independently of the previous assurance that God is reconciled to you in Christ. The moment a man is pardoned he receives the Spirit of adoption, and he immediately can call God his Father, and he can love him, and be at peace with him, and rejoice in him.

Then we notice another error. *Some persons confound this assurance of present acceptance with an assurance of final salvation.* The one is very distinct from the other; for the last I find no authority in the book of God. We may live in the comfortable assurance that we are accepted of God; but that conveys to us no certain assurance that we shall finally be saved. We must still walk by the same rule—we must still mind the same things;

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the same faith that brings us into this state must maintain us in this state. We must watch and pray—we must be laying aside every weight, and the sin which besets us—fighting the good fight of faith, if we will lay hold of eternal life; and all this from the beginning.

Then there is another error—that *this comfortable assurance and persuasion of our adoption is the privilege only of some eminent Christians.* That I believe is a very general notion. There is no authority for it certainly in the book of God. This blessing is as common a blessing as pardon; it is put on the same ground, it is offered in the same general manner. And I would say the whole of that objection is grounded on some secret idea of some moral worth—some idea that holy persons may attain to this by a merit of their own, but others cannot. Brethren, none of these gifts are bestowed, but as they are the purchase of the blood of Christ; and they are all parts of the great salvation held out to you, however unworthy, without money and without price.

I would say of that error to which I have already adverted, that respects the direct impulse of God on the mind, that I wonder any man—I wonder there are so many persons, generally speaking, serious and excellent persons, who are afraid of a doctrine of that sort, and would associate with it ideas of fanaticism. Is it not the universal doctrine of the book of God? That God should dwell with men—that he should make the human heart his temple—that he should take man into communion with himself—is not this the glory of the new dispensation? Is not this all consistent with its spirit? And you lose all these grandeurs, all these hopes of man, in a base and wretched fear, by which you make yourselves subservient to the silly infidel philosophy of the world. Let us think better things—let us think nobler things—let us enter more fully into the character of the Christian dispensation, and know that while, on the one hand, this grand truth is revealed to us—that God dwells in man, and man is called to dwell with God, and to walk with him in secret, sensible, vital fellowship and

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union—that, while this is acknowledged one of the glories of our religion, it is not possible for a man that rightly understands it to convert such a doctrine into an occasion of folly or of sin—that there is a sanctity in it as pure and delicate as the glory of the doctrine itself—and that, wherever the Spirit of God dwells, there must be all the fruits of the Spirit—and that every man must know, unless he be wilfully ignorant, that it is only those who are led by the Spirit of God that are the sons of God.

Let us conclude the whole by a few practical observations:—

In the first place, this doctrine may well turn the attention of those of you to your own condition, who have an assurance in your minds, with respect to your religious state, that you are under the divine displeasure, are still living carelessly, and neglecting the great salvation. Am I addressing any such in the divine presence? You know well, for you cannot have heard the truth so often as you have without knowing, that your religious state is not right—that you have no good hope through grace—that you are not founded on a rock—that were you called into the presence of God you would receive the summons with dread. And yet, alas! with this assurance, with this inward persuasion and conviction in your minds, how carelessly you hear—how you immerse yourselves in the business and pleasures of this life—how habitually do you restrain prayer before God—and how presumptuously do you depend on the exercise of his mercy at some future time! I beseech you, brethren, by the mercy which has spared you till this day, that you no longer live in this state. Turn to God—confess your sin before God—let the weight of your case rest on your conscience—fly to his mercy—remember all that has been said, and all you have heard, from time to time, of his infinite willingness to pardon all them that return to him—and carry this weight with you no longer. Enter into rest—take hold of God that you may be at peace with him—and increase not the weight of your future punishment, by continuing

to resist these impressions, and to turn a deaf ear to these awful warnings.

The subject applies itself to those who have a burdened conscience. How many of you desire to call God, Father? How many of you have heard of this blessing, and perhaps have been waiting for it? And what is the reason that you have not been brought into this state? How is it that you are not rejoicing in the mercy of your God—that you have not received the Spirit of adoption? Examine the fact. Have you earnestly desired it? Has it been a special object of your prayer? Have you learned the art of waiting upon God, keeping your spirits in a waiting frame? Have you been looking out for God? Have you been fully persuaded that this is your Christian privilege and calling? Do you recollect this is a blessing to be attained by simple trust in Christ; that you must plead the merit of his atonement? And do you know that mere trusting will not do!—that those who really trust will plead and pray? When once you get the faith that pleads, and prays, and waits, it is not long before God will hear your earnest prayer, and say unto you, “I am your salvation.” Now look up to him. The blessing is purchased—you are sinful, and you need the heavenly gift—and cannot, therefore, be better prepared for it. All things are ready; come to the marriage. There is the blessing of pardon, free justification before God, with the Spirit of adoption, whereby you call God your Father. There is grace offered to your acceptance in the gospel—I warn you against resting short of it. It cannot be, that these impressions shall continue with them in all their strength. God has begun a good work in you, and awakened you to a sense of the meaning of this great change. You must follow on to know the Lord, and must determine to wait for him, as those who watch for the morning; otherwise those impressions will become weak, and by and by you will find you have grieved the Spirit of God, and that he has departed from you. God is pleased that you should take hold of his strength. Jacob, when he discovered that he was wrestling

with the angel of the covenant—when he found he had got hold of a being who could bless him, he grasped him the more powerfully, and would not let him go. God is well pleased with your earnestness; take hold of the same condescending angel of the gospel covenant, and say, "I will not let thee go unless thou bless me."

Let those who have the Spirit of adoption recollect their privileges. If children, then heirs, heirs of God: this is your blessing. Turn from the world, and claim the communications of his grace, the sanctifying influence of God the Spirit. Take hold of his infinite mercy, and out of that fulness we shall receive them, and grace for grace; until at last we enter on the great inheritance above, and see him in his glory for ever and ever.

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### THE PULPIT GALLERY.

NO. XI.

TESTIMONY TO THE CHARACTER OF HENRY MARTYN.

BY THE LATE REV. B. HALL.

THE religious public have lately been favoured with a rich accession to the recorded monuments of exalted piety, in the life and religious experience of the lamented Henry Martyn. It is delightful to behold in the history of that extraordinary man, talents, which attracted the admiration of one of the most celebrated seats of learning, consecrated to the honour of the cross; an enterprising genius, in the ardour of youth, relinquishing the pursuit of science and of fame, in order to travel in the steps of a Brainerd and a Schwartz. Crowned with the highest honours a university could bestow, we see him quit the luxurious shades of academic bowers, for a tempestuous ocean and a burning clime, for a life of peril and fatigue, from which he could expect no other reward than the heroic pleasure of communicating to perishing millions

the word of eternal life. He appears to have formed his religious character chiefly on the model of Brainerd; and as he equalled him in his patience, fortitude, humility, and love, so he strictly resembled him in his end. Both, nearly at the same age, fell victims to a series of intolerable privations and fatigues, voluntarily incurred in the course of their exertions for the propagation of the faith of Jesus. And though their death was not a violent one, the sacrifices they made, and the sufferings they endured, entitle them to the honours and rewards of a protracted martyrdom. Their memory will be cherished by the veneration of all succeeding ages; and he who reads their lives will be ready to exclaim, "*Here is the faith and patience of the saints.*"

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#### GOD IS LOVE.

God is love: all his perfections and procedures are but so many modifications of his love. What is his omnipotence but the arm of his love? What his omniscience but the medium through which he contemplates the objects of his love? What his wisdom but the scheme of his love? What are the offers of the gospel but the invitations of his love? What the threatenings of the law but the warnings of his love? They are the hoarse voice of his love, saying, "Man! do thyself no harm." They are a fence thrown round the pit of perdition, to prevent rash men from rushing into ruin. What was the incarnation of the Saviour but the richest illustration of his love? What were the miracles of Christ but the condescensions of his love? What were the sighs of Christ but the breath of his love? What were the prayers of Christ but the pleadings of his love? What were the tears of Christ but the dew-drops of his love? What is this earth but the theatre for the display of his love? What is heaven but the Alps of his mercy, from whose summits his blessings, flowing down in a thousand streams, descend to water and refresh his church situated at its base?—*Dr. Waugh.*

## SERMON XXXIII.

### ON THE VICARIOUS SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

BY THE RT. REV. DR. BLOMFIELD,

BISHOP OF LONDON.

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*"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."—1 Cor. xv. 3.*

THE words which are here rendered "first of all," are otherwise interpreted, and mean, amongst the chief things or principal doctrines of the gospel. It is not very material which of the two sentences we attach to the expression; for the words which St. Paul had delivered to the Corinthians, first in order, were no doubt considered by him to be first in importance; they were the foundation, on which the whole superstructure of Christianity was to be raised. The great and astonishing fact that Jesus Christ died for our sins, as an essential and vital truth of the gospel revelation, occupies every where the most conspicuous place in the preaching of the great gospel: which he himself describes as being emphatically the "preaching of the cross." So entirely does the whole fabric of gospel truth appear to him to rest on this one foundation stone, that he speaks of it as being the one needful and sufficient point of knowledge for the Christian minister;—"I determined," he says, "not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified; God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." The hope of Christians, which was made sure by the resurrection of Jesus, had its root in his crucifixion; for if he had not died for our sins, his rising again would not have established the fact of our justification; life and immortality would indeed have been

ascertained by that stupendous miracle; but it would have been to the conscious sinner a life of seclusion from the presence of God and an immortality of woe. Whatever comfort is to be derived from the reflection, that the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the earnest and assurance of our own, derives all its efficacy from the truth that he died for our sins. It is only through this medium that the prospects of the eternal world can be contemplated without apprehension by sinful man,—it is this consideration alone which enables us to view the attributes of God with complacency and comfort, and diffuses over them a sweet and attractive view of love. The sufferings and death of our Saviour Christ are indeed a most interesting and important subject of inquiry, as evincing his perfect sincerity and devotedness, and proving his own entire conviction of the truth of what he taught; and we are by no means to lose sight of this consideration in viewing the benefits which have been derived by us from that wonderful act of condescension and goodness. But if we go no farther than this, we stop very far short of the whole truth; and our notions of that part of the Christian economy, which the apostle held to be of primary and vital importance, will be miserably defective and inaccurate. If the death of Christ was nothing more than his last and most decisive attestation of the truth of his

teaching, it was a mere historical fact involving in itself no peculiar doctrine,—a fact, of which St. Paul could not have been ignorant if he had ever heard the name of Jesus; and yet he says that he received it, that is to say, by revelation; the subject of that revelation being, not simply the fact that Christ had died, but that he had died for our sins.

Again, had our blessed Lord submitted to a painful and ignominious death, only for the purpose of establishing his own veracity, and setting a seal to the truth of the message of holiness which he had proclaimed, it might indeed have been said of Him, considering how deeply, the best interests of mankind were involved in the belief of that message, he laid down his life for the sake of mankind,—for their improvement and for their instruction; but in no intelligible sense of the word could it be said, that, he died for their sins; the particle *for*—“died for their sins”—being in the original a word which signifies *on account of*; evidently implying, that as *sin* caused the death of Christ, so the death of Christ was to be the cause of God’s forgiving sin. The expression “*for our sins*,” cannot reasonably be taken in any other sense than this—in *expiation of our sins*; as in the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews; “Every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.” But the concluding words of the text are quite decisive, as to the sense in which Jesus Christ is declared, by the apostle, to have died for our sins. “I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,” that is to say, according to the prophecies, concerning the Messiah, which are contained in the Jewish Scriptures. In these prophecies, therefore, we may expect to find, not merely the declaration, that the Messiah, the anointed one, should die, but some intimation of the manner in which his death should be connected with the sins of mankind; and such in fact is the character of these predictions. Had the writers of the New Testament been altogether

silent as to the great object which was to be achieved by the voluntary death of Christ, the prophets of the Old would have furnished an explanation of that act of humiliation and mercy, calculated to satisfy all our anxiety, and to animate all our hopes; and to make the gospel dispensation appear in its true colours, as affording a complete and sovereign remedy for sin. That the prophets distinctly announced the connexion between the sufferings of Christ and the salvation of mankind is a fact pointed out by St. Peter, of which salvation he says: “The prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace which should come unto them searching what or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.” More particularly in the great and evangelical prophet, the doctrine of the atonement is clearly and unequivocally marked out, that we should find in his glorious foreshadowing of gospel truth, a sure and immovable foundation for this vital doctrine: and even if it had not been seen, as in fact it is, so interwoven with the whole texture of apostolic teaching, every attempt to separate it would lacerate and mutilate the Christian system, and leave it disfigured with an open inconsistency. Let us hear it: “Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgression, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all. For the transgression of my people was he stricken.” No Christian, it is to be presumed, will dispute that these prophecies relate to the sufferings and death of the Messiah; and will any one, whether a Christian or not, deny that the sufferings are described and are spoken of as expiatory, undergone by one person in the stead of others, and for the purpose of redeeming them from the consequences of their sins. What is the commentary

of the apostle upon this sublime and affecting prophecy? Hear the words of St. Peter;—"Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again: when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." The prophet says, "For the transgression of my people was he smitten." The apostle says to the Romans, "He was delivered for our offences;" and to the Galatians, "He gave himself for our sins." Again, the language of Isaiah is, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him." St. Paul tells the Ephesians, "But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter," is the prophetic description;—"Ye were redeemed," says the apostle, "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." Were there any doubt as to the bearing of this prophecy upon the doctrine of satisfaction and atonement, it would be removed by the express prediction of the angel solemnly delivered to Daniel—that the Messiah should "finish transgression and make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity." If therefore, my brethren, Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture, he died in expiation of those sins,—he died to reconcile man to God.

But the Scriptures of the Old Testament set forth the expiatory nature of Christ's suffering and death; not merely in express prophecy, but in the imagery of type and shadow. It is to this more particularly, that St. Paul refers in the passage which I recommend to your most serious and careful perusal, as most completely establishing the doctrine of the atonement,—I mean the ninth and tenth of Hebrews. Under the law, offences committed in ignorance, or through inadvertency, might be expiated by certain sacrifices, which were called, on that

account, sin-offerings, or trespass-offerings; but those sacrifices went no farther than to procure a remission of the temporal punishment due to those offences; in consideration of them, God being pleased to withhold his immediate judgment which had been denounced against offenders. But it was impossible that such offerings could, by any intrinsic worthiness of their own, make amends for sin, or appease the righteous Judge of mankind; that could only be effected by a sacrifice of a very different kind, of which those were merely the shadows: yet they were the shadows, and therefore they resembled the substance as to their outward appearance, especially in one remarkable feature,—in the shedding of blood:—"Almost all things," says the apostle, in the passage above referred to, "are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood there is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the pattern of things in the heavens," that is, the things under the spiritual dispensation, "should be purified with these; for Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor yet, that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world:" that is, since the Mosaic dispensation: "but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."—This then is the reasoning of the apostle, as the expiatory sacrifices under the law offered year by year continually, were effectual, by God's gracious appointment, to procure remission of the temporal punishment due to offences under the Mosaic law; so the sacrifice of Christ and his precious blood shed upon the cross, offered by him once for all in the heavenly sanctuary, is effectual to the remission of those penalties which are, from the nature of eternal justice, due to the sins of all mankind, for which it is impossible that the blood of bulls and of goats could ever be taken as a commutation.

After such testimony as this, we may well dispense with all further argument, to prove *FIRST, That Christ died for our sins, AND SECONDLY, That He died for our sins according to the Scriptures.* This is, in truth, the point to which all the Scriptures directly or by implication tend,—this is the centre to which all the lines of Christian verity verge; Christ crucified to take away the sins of the world, according to the pre-determined council of God; foreshadowed, by his Holy Spirit, in prophecy and type; carried into effect by the unwilling agency of those who rejected and despised him. If the death of our Saviour Christ had not been a real and complete expiation for the sins of mankind,—had not effected an atonement, that is to say, the reconciliation of men with God, the whole system of Scripture might have been deprived of its characteristic beauty, and enervated of its strength. The apparatus of prophecy, of type, and emblem would have wanted its corresponding reality under the gospel dispensation; the revelation vouchsafed, by the Holy Spirit, of the nature of the divine attributes, the law of holiness, and the sinfulness of man—while they enhanced and magnified the glory of God, would have blotted out the handwriting of ordinances.

The incarnation of our Lord and Saviour Christ is the great *mystery of godliness*; it is a mystery in itself, but it is a mystery of godliness only when viewed in connexion with its end,—the death of an all-sufficient Mediator. His doctrines were the emanation of perfect wisdom, holiness, and love; and they proceeded from his love in all the persuasiveness of reality;—the works which he did testified the truth of his declaration, that he was the Son of God; and it was placed beyond all dispute by the most wonderful of his miracles,—his resurrection from the dead. Therefore of the truth of his religion, of his divine authority, and its paramount obligation on the consciences of mankind, I can entertain no doubt. But in what respects am I a gainer by the light which has thus been shed on the whole of the promises of God,—by the instruction they have given

of the perfect law of holiness,—by the promises of reward, nay, by the prospect of immortality, if I am at the same time assured of what my own reason and conscience too plainly suggest to me, that obedience, complete, unvaried obedience, is not within my power, and that, if it were possible for me to do all that God requires of me, I should still be an unprofitable servant, deserving of no thanks, and no recompense? What then have I to look for, knowing how infinitely short I come to such a sinless, though unprofitable obedience? I am compelled to acknowledge with shame and confusion of face, that my sins are more in number than the hairs of my head. The gospel without the atonement might certainly contribute to my present ease and comfort, by regulating my actions and desires; and it would promote the peace and well-being of society, because it inculcates the duties of forbearance and love: but it would not remove the load of guilt which lies so heavily on me in the sight of a just and holy God; although it might diminish, for it could never do away, the number of my actual transgressions, it would not suffice to calm the pangs of remorse, it would not mitigate the horrors of the parting hour, without the fair prospect of deliverance from the wrath to come. But admit the doctrine of the atonement, and the gospel at once appears, as it was described by the angel who heralded the birth of its divine author, not only “Glory to God in the highest”—but “On earth peace;” peace between man and God, Christ reconciling man unto God by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. The gospel is indeed the glory of God; but it is from the cross alone that it beams with a healing reviving light. The brightness of his presence would be unapproachable and intolerable were it not shrouded by the veil of suffering humanity, in the person of his incarnate Son, dying for the express purpose of bringing us near to God. For “now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” “It is not, therefore, by the precepts merely of the gospel, nor by the revelations of the gospel, nor by the ordi-

nances of the church, that sinners are brought nigh unto God, but by the blood of Christ: and the precepts, and revelation and promises and aids of the gospel—all were in evidence of the efficacy which we derive from the shedding of that precious blood. On this superstructure stands the whole spiritual temple. It is the source of humility, the object of faith, the principle of sanctification, the key to all the treasures of God's mercy. On this ground then, as believers in the gospel, we take our stand; if we recede one hair's breadth from this we relinquish that which holds the whole system together. If Christ died not for our sins according to the Scriptures—if his death was not a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and oblation for the sins of the world, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; but if it was, we have that assurance which alone can satisfy the desires and appease the anxieties of a conscious sinner; we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, and he is the propitiation for our sins.

Well, it may be said, we admit that the words of Scripture seem to favour your supposition, but we cannot believe it, it surpasses the grasp of our reason; we cannot understand it; "it is a hard saying, who can bear it?" What right have you to expect that nothing should be proposed in holy Scripture for your belief, but that which you can thoroughly comprehend? Undoubtedly you can comprehend the fact that Jesus Christ did die for our sins, although you may be wholly ignorant of the mode in which his propitiation was effectual, and of the reasons which moved the supreme arbiter of the universe to accept that wonderful mode of reconciliation. The Scripture not only proposes to us the doctrine of the divine Redeemer, but it proposes it expressly as a mystery—a great mystery; thus primarily excluding it, as to its mode, from the legitimate province of reason, and classing it among the things which are to be believed, simply and exclusively, because God has revealed them to us. No doubt it would gratify the pride, and satiate the curiosity of man, to be made acquainted with all the reasons

of God's providence, especially with the secrets of redemption, those hidden springs of love and holiness which were in action before the foundation of the world; but there are some of the divine councils into which even the angels desire to look, and this probably is one of them.

The expiatory sacrifice of Christ, and his divine nature which alone made that expiation so infinitely meritorious, are not the only mysterious features of God's dealings with mankind. The moral state of man is a mystery throughout, a mystery respecting which reason must be content with the light which revelation casts upon it; and even with that light it can only be viewed "as through a glass darkly." For what can be more mysterious than the origin of sin and evil in the world? A question on which all the powers of human reason have been exerted without success, which no man pretends to consider as clear and easy of comprehension; and if the origin of sin and evil be mysterious, what reason have we to conclude that its remedy should not be mysterious?

My brethren, if you believe the Scriptures, and apply to them the ordinary rules of interpretation, nay, if you do not torture and disfigure them for the express purpose of getting rid of the mystery, (and even then you cannot blot it out from the blessed gospel,) you cannot fail to perceive the word "*atonement*," written therein in characters of light. Consult then your own conscience; go down into the chambers of imagery, unravel the secrets of your heart, see what they are, and what they ought to be, and what of themselves they never can be, and you will wish the doctrine to be true. Embrace it cordially, and with prayer for the increase of your faith, and you will soon feel the force of the exclamation, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death?" Once convinced of your own sinfulness and insufficiency, you will readily admit that it is indeed "a saying worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

But then is it not an awful as well as

an acceptable saying? That our great intercessor and surety hath put away sin, is indeed a joyful announcement; that he hath done so by the sacrifice of himself, is a subject of endless wonder and gratitude; that expiation could not otherwise be made, is a truth above all others calculated to exhibit the exceeding sinfulness of sin,—its hatefulness in the sight of God. Let each man apply that truth to his own case, and say—It was for me that Jesus died upon the cross; it was for me that he endured the contradiction of sinners; it was my sin bowed down his holy head with sorrow in Gethsemane—planted upon his brow the crown of thorns—pierced his hands and his feet; nay, those very sins which, day by day, and hour by hour, I am committing, and by which, as far as in me lies, I render those sufferings and that death of none effect. Can any contemplation be more awful than this? Can we imagine a more powerful discouragement to sin? And if it be less effectual to us than it ought to be, it is because we are not sufficiently alive to the twofold sense in which Jesus Christ died for our sins. He died to redeem us not only from the penalty of sin, but from its power, by opening a way for the Holy Spirit into the soul of man, and purchase glory to God, by the renewal of sinners to holiness. “Christ,” says St. Paul, “hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” But the same apostle tells us that, “He gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world.” But then a deep, heartfelt, abiding sense, not merely an historical belief, but a cordial and joyful acquiescence in the truth, that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, also delivers us from its power; for it cannot be that such a conviction should take place in the soul, without prayer, and meditation, and drawing its affections and desires towards God.

Still less can we conceive it possible that any person could really believe the vital doctrine of the atonement who neglects the ordinance appointed by the Great Atoner for the express purpose of keeping alive the remembrance of that crowning act. “Do this in remembrance of me”—not merely your master, your friend, your instructor, but of me your Saviour. Let this remind you not merely of my sojourn upon earth, of my teaching, of my miracles; but of my death, my body broken, and my blood shed upon the cross for the remission of your sins; and not yours only, but the sins of the whole world. Is it too strong a condemnation to say, that the neglect of the Lord’s Supper is a practical denial of the atonement? Blessed Jesus, Saviour of the world! can we behold thee stretched upon the cross, enduring shame and agony for our sins, shedding forth that precious blood with which thou hast redeemed us on the cross, upheld under all thy sufferings by the desire of saving us miserable sinners from eternal death—can we contemplate this spectacle, and yet contemn and refuse the consecrated symbols of that body so broken, that blood which was so shed for our sins? Oh send thy Holy Spirit to pour into our souls those gracious influences, by which alone we can realize to ourselves the blessed fruits of thy cross and passion, strengthening our faith, subduing our inordinate affections, and animating our hopes with clearer and clearer prospects of that glory, in which we shall stand around the throne, and join in the triumphant hymn which shall then be raised by all the redeemed of the earth—“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and honour, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and glory.”—“Blessing and honour and glory, be to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.”



## SERMON XXXIV.

### THE MADNESS AND FOLLY OF RELIGION.

DELIVERED TO MEDICAL STUDENTS,

BY THE REV. T. BINNEY.

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*"The prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad."*—Hosea ix. 7.

I SHALL not detain you by any minute criticism on the exact and literal application of this language; suffice it to say, that it is capable of two senses, according as you regard it as the *cause*, or as the *effect*, of the "days" of "visitation" and of "recompense," mentioned in the preceding clause of the verse. If you take it to describe the *cause* of that visitation or judgment which was coming on the land, it will then mean that the prophets and spiritual men, or men inspired by the Spirit, and commissioned to address the people with the authority of God—that they had actually been accounted fools and madmen—that they had been ridiculed and scorned as "vain babblers"—that their messages had been treated with contempt, and themselves with indignity—and that, therefore, Jehovah, who had thus been despised and insulted in the persons of his own prophets, had determined to punish the offenders by bringing upon them some terrible visitation. If you take it, in the second sense, as describing the *effect* of this visitation, it will then mean that those who had long been disobedient to the divine voice, as addressed to them by the commissioned servants and in the "true sayings" of God, should at length be given up, as an appropriate punishment, to the influence of strong delusion, that they might believe a lie—that men, pretending to be prophets, and falsely laying claim to intercourse with the Spirit, should arise

among them, and be permitted to deceive them to their destruction—that *these* prophets should be fools and fanatics, though the infatuated multitude should confide in their counsels—and that *they*, however venerated and obeyed for their spiritual pretensions, should only resemble the oracles and soothsayers of the heathen, of whom it is said by Isaiah, that God "turneth their wise men backward, changeth their knowledge into folly, and maketh their diviners mad."

This last sense is perhaps the more probable of the two; but, as the *thing* described in the first actually occurred among the Hebrews, whether intended in this passage or not, it is in allusion to *that* that we shall be guided in our observations this morning. "*The prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad.*" Such was both the feeling and the phraseology indulged in by many of the Jews, in relation to the very men of whom they had every evidence that they came from God. It sometimes meant the utter rejection of their message, and was intended to express an absolute disbelief of the *matter* of their testimony—and it sometimes meant a disapprobation of their zeal, and was intended only to censure the warmth and earnestness of *manner* with which they enforced what was admitted to be true. The phrase was also sometimes employed to stigmatize the penitent and the spiritual among the people, who, in obedience to conscience and to truth,

abandoned their follies and returned to God—according to the representation of one of the prophets, “He that departeth from evil is accounted mad.”

Now, something similar to all this takes place among ourselves. Human nature is the same now in this country that it was in the land of Judea three thousand years ago. Its dislike of God and of his servants is the same. Its pride and affectation of superiority is the same. It still has a high conceit of its capacities and powers, and it expresses that conceit by despising, as unworthy its regard, the discoveries of revelation, or by ridiculing the weakness of the men who either enforce them with earnestness or who follow them with fidelity. “The preacher is a fool, and his disciple is mad.” This is its language; and this proud and petulant conclusion—this judgment pronounced without examination and without thought, settles the matter, it should seem, for the passing moment—raises the mirth of the young, the volatile, and the vain—affords them the rational and dignified satisfaction of laughing at the weakness of the man who has courage to be virtuous—and preserves them in the enjoyment of the very laudable liberty of making themselves as contemptible and as wicked as they please!

Let us proceed, then, to examine the *sanity* and the *wisdom* of conduct like this by examining the madness and the folly with which it wars. “The Christian preacher is a fool, and the Christian disciple is mad.” The man who “walks in the Spirit,” and the man who “converts him from the error of his way,” are considered alike to be imbecile or insane. Such, it is not to be denied, is the real sentiment both of the infidel, who rejects the truth of Christianity altogether, and of the worldly and irreligious among its professed recipients, who deride the habits and the principles of the pious. Let us examine it.

“*The prophet is a fool.*” The Hebrew term, “prophet,” signifies, in Christian phraseology, a preacher—one who expounds the Scriptures, and promulgates the gospel: and in this sense we use it here. To judge, then, of the folly of the

man, the absurdity of his office, and the mental weakness of his own character, let us notice what he is, and what he aims to accomplish.

The Christian prophet is the public expositor of a book whose claim to be considered a divine revelation has been admitted, after prolonged research, by the master-spirits of every age—men who have been distinguished by splendid genius—varied capacity—pure and elevated intellect—profound and diversified acquisitions; a book whose pretensions are supported by several distinct processes of argument, each, separately and alone, amounting to moral proof; the whole, when combined, approaching to something like positive demonstration. This book is the most singularly constructed of any in the world: it consists of a number of small tracts, about sixty-six, the composition of above thirty individuals—persons of all classes, from kings to peasants—of various education—of every kind and measure of intellectual ability—and who lived scattered over a period of far more than a thousand years: and yet this book, thus composed, is always consistent with itself—it has a beginning, a middle, and an end; it is evidently a *whole*; it is the realization of the *idea* of one mind, executed by a number of others, who, like the labourers and masons under direction of an architect, could have had no conception of the completed appearance of the edifice upon which they were employed, but who laid stone upon stone in blind obedience, until the whole stood forth in its sublimity and perfection. This book contains in it the best account of the origin of the universe, and the best interpretation of the present appearances of the earth and man. It teaches the sublimest theology; it reveals a God, spiritual in his essence—perfect in all natural and moral attributes—the creator and governor of the world; it prescribes a worship suitable to his high and holy character, and directly tending to improve and to elevate that of his worshippers. This book accounts for, and all along proceeds upon, the fact of the apostasy and sinfulness of man—a fact illustrated by all history, confessed and lamented by

moralists of all ages, and corroborated by personal observation and personal consciousness. It proposes a plan of mercy, and reveals means of restoration, precisely adapted to this condition of our nature; which meets at once the fears and apprehensions prompted by guilt, and the weakness and corruption flowing from depravity. This book sets before the view of its disciples the highest possible standard of excellence; it places the principles of morals on the firmest basis; it enforces them by the highest sanctions; it carries them to the farthest extent; and encourages obedience by the most affecting and powerful motives. In the principal personage whose life it contains, it exhibits a perfect model of all that is dignifying and beautiful in character; and, in the history of every other individual, nothing is recorded but what has a tendency either to stimulate to obedience, or to deter from transgression. Finally—for time would fail me to enumerate all the distinguishing peculiarities of the volume in question—this book reveals a future world in such a manner as carries with it the stamp of divinity, both by what it says and by what it does not say:—it descends to no minute and curious descriptions; the speakers and writers seem to exercise the most singular control over the fancy and imagination, when touching upon topics the most tempting to men pretending to familiarity with the invisible and the future; there is a soberness, a calmness, and a grandeur about their discoveries of the worlds that are not seen, just fitted to affect us with solemn delight and salutary terror; there is nothing to provoke or to satisfy impertinent curiosity, or to degrade the subject by the ridiculous and the mean; there is every thing, however, to render the representation what it is intended to be, and which falls in with the evident design of the whole communication—namely, an instrument for promoting the greatest improvement of which our nature is capable, and the highest happiness for which it was made.

Such is a description—and, permit me to remind you, a very, very imperfect description—of that wonderful book, the

principles of which it is the duty of the Christian prophet to illustrate and enforce. Let us next observe how he does this. It is his business to imbibe a portion of that exalted spirit which pervades every page of this extraordinary record—to come forth, from time to time, and address himself to his fellows in the accents of love and with the eloquence of the heart; he is to exhibit the great principles of religious and moral truth, with simplicity, seriousness, and affection; he is to take man as he finds him—an unhappy and guilty intelligence—made up of contradictory impulses—with a perception of right, and a bias to wrong—“sowing the wind, and reaping the whirlwind;” he is to reveal to him a system which precisely meets the necessities of his nature, and he is to carry it out, when professed to be received, into all the most exalted forms of personal character and social virtue. He is to inform the ignorant, rouse the sluggish, animate the desponding, encourage the active, and comfort the distressed; he is to warn the impenitent, rebuke the inconsistent, terrify the vicious, expose the hypocritical, and denounce the ungodly; he is to do all this—and more than this—in a way wonderfully adapted to the nature of man, and to the actual and unavoidable condition of the great mass of the species:—men are to be congregated together, and *there*, while in a manner passive, without any severe demand upon their faculties, they are to be made familiar with the sublimest conceptions—to be interested and impressed by the *living voice*—to be urged to aspire after the glory and happiness of another world, while they are taught all that it becomes them to be in relation to the present. This simple and peculiar *mode*, by which the Christian prophet is to make his truths *tell* upon the condition and the character of society, is at once suited to man as man, whose nature is made to be affected by such an instrument; and it is suited to the numerous children of labour and of toil, who must depend upon strong impressions from without for vivid and extensive conceptions of religious truth and religious duty.

Such is the Christian prophet in his furniture, his office, and his aims. If time permitted, it would be easy to show that his influence upon society has been always and immensely beneficial—I mean of course when he has continued to be what he was at first, and what he is intended to be by the system to which he belongs—neither degraded to the condition of a political drudge, nor raised and corrupted into that of a prince and a potentate. It was the voice of the preacher that shook the gods of the ancients from the heaven they had usurped—that compelled them to vacate their thrones and their temples, and to relinquish the tyranny they had so long exercised over the heathen world. It was the Christian preacher that introduced a new stream of ideas into the human mind—ideas that gave to morals a higher tone, and to religion a positive existence. It was the efforts of the Christian preacher that changed the character of nations and the complexion of literature. Even in the dark ages, when he had become indolent, vicious, silent, and corrupt, it was by him that the lamp of knowledge was preserved from being totally extinguished; it was by him that it was trimmed and fed, and brought forth to guide and to gladden the nations, when he aroused them from the sleep and the superstition of centuries. It was by the voice of the preacher that religion was reformed; it was by the erudition of the preacher, and by the effect of his agency on the public mind, that the revival of learning was accelerated and encouraged. In our own country it was by the Christian preacher—it was in consequence of the spirit promoted by his religion, and the influence exerted by his office, that civil liberty was saved—that the tree was planted and nourished, under whose shade we repose, and whose fruit we gather; and, in the present day, I do not hesitate to affirm that it is the preacher who exerts the greatest influence on the positive virtue and happiness of the nation; it is by him that every society is advocated, and every agent encouraged, that aims at the moral education of the children of the poor, or the religious advantage of the

poor themselves. It is by the preacher that the purest principles of conduct are kept before the view of the mass of the people—that they are impressed upon the moral sense, and made to exert an influence in the formation of character. It is by the preacher that an element of consolation, contentment, and joy is made to go forth and to diffuse itself over the hearts and the habitations of the children of toil and poverty, of sorrow and misfortune. It is by him that the guilty are called to penitence, the penitent led to pardon, and the pardoned filled "with joy and peace in believing." In short, to see what is actually effected by the preacher, and to be assisted in calculating the amount of good for which society is indebted to him, only imagine that the whole race of the Christian prophets were extinguished—that their places of instruction were closed—that their voices were never heard, and their influence never felt; imagine either that they were not succeeded by any public teachers at all—that the whole people were left without any thing whatever in the form of oral instruction; or imagine that the preacher was universally succeeded by the advocates of the modern coarse and vulgar infidelity; and then fancy what would be the consequence—the consequence of this change to the virtue and happiness of the nation—and say, say if you can, that you could contemplate *that* result with any feelings but those of melancholy and concern, if not, indeed, with apprehension and terror.

I now ask the question, but I shall not stay to attempt to answer it; I shall leave that principally to yourselves—I ask the question, *Is the prophet a fool?* Can you really believe it? Can you *pretend* to believe it? When you have brought before you all that he professes to be, and all that he attempts to accomplish—when you think of what he has done, and of what he is doing—can you seriously unite either in the depreciation of his pretensions, or in ridicule of his office? Place upon one side all the evidence in support of the divinity of the book which the preacher is to expound, and all the facts illustrative of his immense and beneficial

influence on society—and place, upon the other, the incredible propositions which *he* must of necessity believe who rejects the first, and the state of feeling he must possess who could view the second with coldness and indifference; contrast the character of both minds—that of the preacher and that of his opponent: contrast them as to their intellectual condition and moral properties; and determine for yourselves *which of the two* is best entitled to the epithet in the text.

"*The prophet is a fool.*" This language might be further illustrated, not as the sentiment of the infidel objector, but as that of the man who professes himself a Christian, but who is offended by the earnestness and enthusiasm with which the preacher exhibits his theme, and urges its acceptance. On this, however, we shall merely remark, that either on the admission of the truth of what the preacher promulgates, or on the supposition of its falsehood, but with the admission that the preacher himself *believes* it to be true—in either case the charge of imbecility and folly must rest with the man who could make such admissions, and yet be willing to witness, in the advocate of this truth, or this supposed truth, any thing *but* the most fervid zeal, and impassioned enthusiasm. In the estimation of the preacher, he is in possession of the grand secret by which alone humanity can be permanently benefited—that secret which God himself has revealed, for the very purpose of saving an apostate species, and restoring the harmony of the world; he believes that the highest happiness of the present life, and the very *possibility* of happiness in the next, depends on the reception of the truth which he is concerned to teach; he who considers that this *must* be the feeling of the Christian prophet, on the supposition of his moral sincerity, instead of wondering at the warmth with which the duties of the office are occasionally discharged, will rather wonder at the tameness and apathy by which those who sustain it are too frequently distinguished. *Enthusiasm* is a term employed in a good sense, and is used to describe the feeling with which men often devote themselves to

national interests and secular professions. The politician, the poet, the painter, the man of science and of literature, or, what is more to the purpose at present, the physician and the surgeon, who give themselves to the science and the philosophy of their profession—who enlarge its boundaries, unravel its mysteries, and promote its advancement—these men are spoken of with rapture for the *extravagance and eccentricity of zeal* which they consume on the promotion of their favourite pursuits; they are thus spoken of by the *very men* who, when a mere title of such zeal appears in the professors of a science in comparison with which every other sinks into insignificance, are ever ready to express their *pity*, in the language of contempt—the *prophet is a fool, or the preacher is mad!* Now, conduct like this is just any thing but wisdom. To use a familiar comparison, which, with your professional predilections, you will readily understand, it is like the feeling of a man who, on seeing the successful application of medicine in suddenly raising an individual from the bed of sickness, and bringing him forth into society in vigour and in health, should fix his admiration, *not* upon the skill of the physician who had restored the patient, but upon the skill of the *operatives* who selected the fashion of his coat, or the figure of his shoe. Any extravagance, in fact, on the subject of religion is more rational and more dignified than indifference; and any folly is tolerable and innocent but that which admires the enthusiasm often absurdly devoted to present interests and temporary claims, and condemns that which belongs to the eternal, the infinite, and the future.

It is time, however, to advance to the illustration of the second clause, "the spiritual man is mad."

"*The spiritual man is mad!*" This we take to be the language of the man of mere secular virtue, who indeed may profess himself a Christian, and who may be distinguished for much that is amiable in manners, and excellent in character. This is his language in allusion to the *methodist*; that is, to the *consistent* disciple of the preacher—*one* who carries his

principles into practice, and who becomes distinguished by the peculiarities and habits of the religious life.

In order to judge of the justice of the epithet, let us take the lowest form of the men of spiritual attainment, and the highest form of the men of secular virtue, and let us ascertain *which of the two* deserves most to be admired and approved, upon the principles of enlightened and purified reason. The spiritual or religious man may be one of but little grasp of intellect, with limited abilities, circumscribed knowledge, and even distinguished by some mental weaknesses, which excite, in those who know his worth and respect him most, deep and durable regret; yet, with all this, he is sincerely and consistently a Christian—that is the point, he is sincerely and consistently a Christian: that is, he is conscious of sin, and he therefore indulges the feelings of contrition and repentance: he desires forgiveness, and he seeks it by humble faith in the propitiatory sacrifice; he is sensible of depravity, and he therefore asks the influence of that Spirit which the Scriptures reveal to purify his affections; he is convinced of the existence of God, and the claims which he has on his veneration and regard, and he therefore cultivates the habit of devotion, and studies to honour him by conscientious obedience; he is ignorant, and he therefore aims at enlarging his acquaintance with truth, by the daily perusal of the written word: he believes the promises of Scripture, he therefore pleads them in prayer, and confides in them in practice; he considers himself as advancing rapidly to eternity, and hence he lives in diligent preparation for the circumstance of death; he reads of heaven, and of hell, and he is anxious to be fitted for the one, and to escape the other; he finds himself required to glorify God, by acting under the influence of religious motives, by the exercise of faith, and by benevolent regard to the interests of others—and he attempts all this in humble dependence on divine assistance, and yet with watchfulness and vigour in the voluntary employment of his faculties and powers. Such are a few of the cha-

acteristics by which the spiritual man is distinguished, and for which he is ridiculed and stigmatized as deserving the contemptuous application of the epithet in the text.

Observe, then, in the next place, the conduct and the character of the man by whom this epithet is so freely bestowed. This man you may suppose to be as excellent and distinguished, in the moral and intellectual properties of his character, as it is possible for a human being to be. He may possess genius, talents, and sensibility; he may be amiable, honourable, and benevolent; may have acquired the highest rank in his profession; he may be loved for his modesty, and venerated for his worth: yet, with all this, he may be chargeable with such immense deficiencies of character as amount to nothing short of that very *madness* which he attributes to others. There is another world as well as the present—a world for which, though professing to expect it, this man has made no preparation; there is a God, but he neglects him—perhaps profanes his name, and dishonours his sabbaths. He professes to believe the Bible, but he never opens it—to believe in Christ, but he practically rejects him—to have committed sin, but he never repents of it—to expect death, but he lives as if he were immortal. He *says* that he believes there is a heaven, but to be fitted for its enjoyments excites none of his solicitude—that there is a hell, but he makes no efforts, in humble accordance with the dictates of revelation, to escape the penalty it is intended to inflict. Now, let any person of common sense just reflect for a moment on the characters in question, and let him honestly say *which of the two* is to be “accounted mad;”—he who, with all his ignorance and weakness, is alive to the sublime relations he sustains to eternity; or he who, whatever may be his abilities, is confining them to the concerns and the advantages of a moment, and losing the distinctions of that endless existence which, all the time, he professes to expect!—The eternal God has determined the matter, by telling us that to the man who cares only to be *rich* in relation to earth, whether

that consist in wealth or in talent, separate from religion, that to *that man*, the epithet of "*fool*" is applied in the vocabulary of heaven!

The subject might be further illustrated by taking an individual who, after years passed in moral insensibility, or criminal indulgence, should suddenly be affected by religious truth, and should rise into the character of a religious man. We might take such a person, and, considering the scorn, and ridicule, and laughter with which he would be assailed by his former associates, we might contrast *his* conduct with theirs—*his* who awakes, as it were, to the voice of reason, and to the suggestions and impulses of his better nature—and *theirs* who continue imbruted in the bondage of the flesh, degraded and chained by the slavery of the senses. The thing, however, is too absurd to be patiently pursued; for the impure and the profligate to talk of the madness of the man who breaks from their confederacy, and to laugh at him as if he had forsaken a company of philosophers, would only excite one's indignant contempt, if it were not that the poor idiots are entitled to compassion. The ridicule or the hatred of such characters is always to be considered as approbation and praise. To turn from iniquity, and to be accounted mad, is the way to be regarded as rational and wise by the angels in heaven—those sages of eternity, who understand the nature and the province of intellect, and who rejoice over every sinner that repenteth. For those who, thus being led to repentance, become "*wise unto salvation*," and for those who are honoured to be the instruments of promoting this result—for both are reserved, by the mercy of God, some of the highest honours which eternity can confer:—"They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars, for ever and ever."

In conclusion, I would urge upon those whom I have the privilege to address, the important lessons which the present subject involves, and which they will readily detect. *If any of you* have just left the parental roof, and have arrived here with

the habits of a pious family still about you, let nothing shame you out of their continued cultivation; *if any of you* have begun to feel the pernicious influence of evil communications, break instantly with the criminal seducers; *if any of you* have proceeded far in the absurd career of scepticism or of vice, be persuaded to return, in spite of the insane ridicule you may receive from your companions; *if any of you* are scouted as *saints*, and have to sustain indignity or contempt for your steady attachment to God and to truth, be not discouraged; remember that on *your side* are the wise and the virtuous of all worlds—the excellent of earth, and the perfect in heaven; *if any of you* are disposed to think lightly of the Holy Scriptures—to neglect the instructions of the Christian preacher, and to associate religion with weakness and fanaticism—recollect that the *probability* is that you are very ignorant of the subjects on which you are about to dare to dogmatize—that, by doing so, you will only betray to the intelligent your intellectual poverty, and, which will be more galling perhaps, expose yourselves to the commiseration and pity of the pious. Let me beseech all of you to fortify your minds against the dangers of your position, by studying both the Christian evidences and the Christian record; make it a point of conscience to attend regularly on the ordinances of Christian worship; and ever cultivate a reverential regard to that Being of whose wisdom and benevolence you witness so many proofs in the progress of your studies; forget not that *He* knows the wants of the mind, and has provided for those wants, just as he knows the wants of the body, and has provided for *them*;—that, with this view, he has addressed to you the gospel of his Son, and commanded you to receive it, because he knows that you have need both of the pardon of sin, and the renovation of your nature; by repentance and faith seek the enjoyment of these incomparable blessings—blessings without which you *may* certainly be successful in the world, but can never be properly prepared for leaving it; and leave it you *must*, whether prepared for the tremen-

dous transition or not. And now, one word in relation to a subject on which one word will be sufficient, and then I have done. I beseech you, then, by all the feelings you possess as sons and as brothers—by the recollections you retain of your father's house—by a mother's intense and irrepressible anxiety, and by a sister's pure and angelic affection—as you desire to be respected, and ought to desire to be worthy of respect—as you would wish to possess, in future years, internal serenity in looking back to the habits of the present period—in the name of God—by the reality of judgment, of heaven, and of hell—by all that is authoritative in truth, and all that is tender in friendship, I beseech you *“to flee youthful lusts that war against the soul!”*—to study, in this respect, to maintain a conscience and a character void of offence!—to erect yourselves *above* yourselves, and to exercise, by reason and religion, an abiding control over the appetites and passions!—let the man govern the animal, and let God govern the man! Supplicate gracious aid to assist and to strengthen; and, as humble and consistent disciples of his Son, aim at the attainment of elevated excellence, and seek for glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life!

## REFLECTIONS AT TIBERIAS.

THE composure which came over my feverish spirits at this hour was inexpressibly refreshing: I laid myself down upon the ground, and, resting my head upon a stone near me, drew a little coolness from the soil: while the simple train of reflections which naturally sprung up from the scene around me added much to my enjoyment. At a great distance to the north was the mountainous horizon, on the summit of which stands Safet, glistening with its noble castle: it is not improbably supposed that our Saviour had this spot in his eye, and directed the attention of his disciples to it, when he said, “A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid;” for it is in full view from the Mount of Beatitudes, as well as from this place; and, indeed, seems to command all the country round to a great extent.

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Tracing, at a glance, the margin of this simple lake, on the opposite or eastern side, the eye rests on the inhospitable country of the Gadarenes—inhabitable to this day. But that which awakens the tenderest emotions in viewing a scene like this, is the remembrance of ONE who, formerly, so often passed this way; and never passed without leaving, by his words and actions, some memorial of his divine wisdom and love. Here, or in this neighbourhood, most of his mighty works were done: and in our daily religious services we have read, with the most intense interest, those passages of the gospel which refer to these regions. However uncertain other traditional geographical notices may be, *here* no doubt interrupts our enjoyment in tracing the Redeemer's footsteps. This, and no other, is the sea of Galilee—in its dimensions, as I should judge, resembling exactly the size of the isle of Malta, about twenty miles in length, twelve in breadth, and sixty in circumference. Here Jesus called the sons of Zebedee, from mending their nets, to become “fishers of men.” Here he preached to the multitudes crowding to the water's edge, himself putting off a little from the shore in Simon Peter's boat. But there is not now a single boat upon the lake to remind us of its former use. Yonder, on the right, must have been the very spot where, in the middle of their passage from this side toward Bethsaida and Capernaum, the disciples were affrighted at seeing Jesus upon the water—when he gently upbraided the sinking faith of Peter—when he said to the winds and waves, “Be still!”—and the sweet serenity which now rests upon the surface is the very same stillness which then succeeded. Here, finally, it was that Jesus appeared, the third time after his resurrection, to his disciples, (John xxi.) and put that question to the zealous, backslidden, but repentant Peter, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?”—one question thrice repeated; plainly denoting what the Saviour requires of all who profess to be his; and followed up by that solemn charge, “Feed my lambs—feed my sheep.”—*Jowett's Res. in Syria.*



## SERMON XXXV.

### GOD'S CARE FOR HIS PEOPLE

BY THE REV. A. E. FARRAR.

*"He careth for you."*—1 Pet. v. 7.

IF ever opinion entertained by any human mind was fraught with more than ordinary absurdity and cruelty, it is that which, excluding the divine Being from the government of the world he has formed, represents it as abandoned to the sport of a blind and uncertain *chance*. For were it possible to conceive that infinite Wisdom knows not our affairs; or that, supremely happy in himself, the God of unbounded love does not concern himself about them; could it be credited, that of him who "fills all things," the world is empty, while we gazed upon "the fatherless void," we might exclaim as Paul did, under a supposition not more abhorrent to truth, "We are of all men most miserable."

There is, however, another sentiment upon this subject, which, if more feasible, is not less scripturally incorrect. I allude to the theory which represents the Almighty as "full orb'd, in his whole round of rays complete," and only condescending to afford mankind some general and undefined regards; and his government as a mere mechanical agency, controlled by certain immutable laws, which admit not of one peculiar or benevolent attention. Infidels and semi-infidels have attempted to derive support to such views from the consideration of man's comparative insignificance. In the flowery numbers and classic styles of poetry, we have been taught

"—— The universal cause  
Acts not by partial, but by general laws,  
He sees with equal eye, as *Lord* of all,  
A hero perish, or a sparrow fall;  
Systems or atoms into nothing hurl'd,  
And now a bubble burst, and now a world."

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This appears to us to contain an awful reflection upon God. We deny not, that a thinking man, contemplating the grandeur of his Creator, may, for a moment, be tempted to question the individuality of his attentions. Led by the discoveries of science, the imagination may travel from world to world, and system to system, amidst the still increasing magnificence of the divine formations, until our earth becomes an indiscernible speck, and appear to bear no more proportion to the other productions of creative energy, than a single leaf to the foliage of a widely extended forest. Amid the illimitable expansion around, we may feel ourselves dwindle into nothingness, and with somewhat of the hesitancy of unbelief, may ask, "What is *man*, that thou art mindful of him?" But, be it remembered, that little and great are distinctions of finite minds, which will bear no correct application to the divine Being; and when we consider, that he "fillets all in all," that he is at the same moment every where, no object can be too minute for his attention; and while he "hangs the earth over the empty space," and wheels planets in their orbits, he, with no less regard, superintends "the flutterings of the bee," and directs the smallest corpuscle of blood that flits through the veins of the smallest animalcule.

I am not prepared to say the subject of a particular providence involves no difficulties. *One* is, the apparent disorder that exists in many providential arrangements; but of this we are incompetent to judge, because we cannot embrace the whole circumference of the divine proceeding. The mighty chain of his deal-

ings seems often intercepted and broken; but when we are enabled to trace up the concatenation of causes and events to their ultimate tendencies—to look along the line to its termination, every thing will demonstrate the perfection of a divine agency. At present, “we know” only “in part.” The infinite combinations and workings of the admirable machinery, which, to the eye of the artist, are simplicity itself, may seem to us mere complicated confusion; but when, in the light of eternity, and with an eye strengthened by the vision of God, we look through the perplexing movements, every thing will appear honourable to the wisdom and benevolence of Him who, in adoring wonder, we shall perceive, “hath done all things well”—“Clouds and darkness are round about him; but justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.”

Every difficulty, however, with which this subject is perplexed, gives place to the authority of God; and it is sufficient for us that the doctrine of a particular providence is pre-eminently that of the Scriptures. On this point, no words need be more explicit than those of the text—“HE,” that is God, “CARETH FOR YOU.” They are adduced as a motive for “casting all our care upon him;” and it is impossible to conceive a motive more obvious and persuasive. But I purpose to give them a distinct consideration as a truth of general practical importance. Let us inquire to whom they refer? *Whether the truth they state can be established? and what improvement should be made of the doctrine?* And,

*First, To WHOM DO THESE WORDS REFER?* Not to the inanimate, but rational creation—to man.

There is, indeed, a sense in which God cares for all his creatures, animate and inanimate. He “maketh the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice.” He covers the fields with abundance. He “crowns the year with his goodness.” He beams forth in the spring, and approaches us in the bounties of summer, and loads us with the profusion of autumn. During the stormy winter, the insignificant sparrow chirping on the hedge,

“falleth not to the ground without his notice.” He “feedeth the young ravens;” he “careth for oxen.” “The eyes of all wait upon him, and he giveth them their meat in due season.” Incomparably beautiful in this view is the language of our Lord to his disciples. “Take no thought what ye shall eat; consider the ravens; they have no barn nor storehouse; your Father feedeth them. And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field; they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Your Father clotheth them.” But the arrangements of Providence, like the dispensations of grace, concern more immediately *man*.

Him God has made capable of knowing and loving himself. In the visitations that meet him he can recognise his Father; and through the channel of benevolent communication made to him, return to the source of all his blessings. And man needs the most effective expressions of divine attention. Immortals, standing on the brink of eternity, and yet ignorant of the events of the next hour; capable of celestial enjoyments, but placed in circumstances inimical to their attainment; surrounded with enemies, and incident to a thousand unseen calamities; miserable indeed were your lot, my brethren, if left to struggle alone with your difficulties. I know we are *unworthy* of the divine attention. Though “*he careth for you*,” some of you are thoughtlessly unconcerned about *him*. Suppose not, however, that Providence waiteth upon your sins, continuing impenitent; every part of his word denounceth wrath against you, and your final doom must be inevitable and aggravated perdition. Yet Providence is co-operating with grace to save you. In what period hath God left himself “without witness, doing good, sending rain and fruitful seasons, and filling men’s hearts with food and gladness?” To what part of the world hath he not gone forth in expressions of beneficence and mercy; shining in the splendour of the sun, instructing by the pale glory of the moon, and twinkling in the stars?

"Day unto day uttereth speech." In every thing, the Lord is looking after the interests of man.

But the persons more immediately concerned in our subject, are described in a preceding part of the epistle, as "called out from darkness into marvellous light;" "which in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctification of the Spirit." This is designatory phraseology, which needs no explanation. But if there be any circumstances in which the consolation of the subject may be peculiarly claimed, they are those of suffering. Of the persons primarily interested in the text, the apostle says, "If need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations;" and intimates, that further and severer trials awaited them. "Think it not strange," &c. How soothing must it have proved to persons so situated, to read, "*Casting all your care upon HIM, for HE careth for you.*"

"His saints are lovely in his sight,  
He views his children with delight,  
He sees their hope, he knows their fear,  
He looks and loves his image there."

*Secondly.* Our next inquiry is, WHETHER THE TRUTH THESE WORDS STATE, CAN BE SUBSTANTIATED?

And, happily, on a point of so much consequence, we are not left to mere conjectures. Had we no express declaration on the subject, we might, indeed, safely rest it upon deduction; and an inference, the most obvious, drawn from the most simple premises, would immediately offer itself; an inference from the divine interest in us. Shall not the Maker care for his works? Does the potter form his vessel that it may be instantly dashed in pieces by the first rude hand that may touch it? Does the artist employ his pains and skill in constructing a curious piece of machinery, and then abandon it to the sport of a blind or malevolent curi-

osity? But God has expended upon believers wonders of wisdom and goodness: he has done more; he has made them miracles of mercy; and can he cease to feel interested in their welfare? Similar, on this topic, was the reasoning of our adorable Redeemer—"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? and not one of them falleth to the ground without your Father. Ye are of more value than many sparrows."

This is not a subject involving the least uncertainty. It is revealed in the most explicit terms. We have but to turn over the pages of the holy writ, to perceive it shining in all the radiance of divine illumination. Let us examine a few passages. Here is one—"Fear not Abram; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Perhaps, you say, this concerned Abram only. But "they that are of faith are Abram's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Well; here is another. "The Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste-howling wilderness; he led him about; he instructed him; he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone did lead him." This, you say, refers to the Israelites; recollect, however, that "the things which happened unto them were examples." We will turn to the book of Psalms—"The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers."—"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; for he knoweth whereof we are made, and remembereth that we are but dust." On this pleasing subject, the prophet Isaiah is equally evangelical as upon every other. "Fear thou not," says he, in the language of God; "I am with thee. When thou passest through the water and through the fire, I will be with thee; the flames shall not kindle upon thee, neither shall the floods drown thee. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they

may: yet will I not forget thee. I have graven thee on the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." I will make one quotation more. "Then," says Malachi (and they were bad times in which he prophesied,) "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard them; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." These are all passages from the Old Testament; in the New, this doctrine, like that of immortality, shines still more resplendently; and it may be enough to state, that the sermons of our Lord, and the epistles of his apostles, are in perfect coincidence with the language of our text, and most explicitly prove that God "careth for us."

Is it asked, do the divine proceedings correspond with this language? We appeal to *facts*. The truth derives the most ample illustration and confirmation from *experience*. A few instances may suffice for selection. The first that presents itself is in the Old Testament. And here you anticipate me: it is the history of Joseph. The foolish predilection of Jacob had rendered Joseph obnoxious to his brethren's hatred; when sent to the fields of Dothan, where they fed their flocks, to inquire after their welfare, the unnatural men seized the opportunity of revenging the preference of their father upon the innocent object of his affections; and "Joseph was sold into Egypt." To conceal their crime from the aged patriarch, they dyed Joseph's coat in the blood of a kid, and set forward towards the vale of Hebron, the family residence. I seem to see the venerable Jacob ascend the hill, look wistfully toward Dothan, and then, as if boding some ill, retire thoughtfully to his home. At length, the ten sons make their appearance; he casts over them his inquiring eye, and has scarcely asked for Joseph, when they produce the blood-stained robe, and, with all the apathy of guilt, state, "Behold,

this have we found; know now whether it be thy son's coat or not?" "It is my son's coat," said he. "Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces; some evil beast hath devoured him; I will go down to the grave unto my son mourning." His tears were scarcely wiped, his wounds were not yet closed, when his sons returning from Egypt, where they had been to purchase corn for the support of their families during a famine, informed their father, that unless their younger brother, Benjamin, returned with them into Egypt, the governor would sell them no more corn. The prospect of this second loss was more than Jacob could well bear. "How was it that ye dealt so ill with me, as to tell the man ye had yet a brother? Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and now ye will take Benjamin away. All these things are against me, and ye will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave!" Stop, Jacob! God "careth for thee." "Joseph is yet alive, and is governor of Egypt." And when a few weeks after, Jacob had embraced the long-lost exile on the plains of Goshen, he heard the same from his own lips—"God hath sent me before you, to save your lives by a great deliverance."

An instance may be selected from the New Testament; the case of Peter himself. His enemies had put him in prison, and waited but the lapse of Pentecost to glut their malice in his blood; but "prayer was made of the church without ceasing to God for him." And the very night before he was to have been brought out to the people, an angel of God, specially appointed for the purpose, roused him from his sleep, snapped his fetters, and "delivered him from the will of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews." I see him in the street, after the angel's departure looking this way and that, and asking "Is it not a dream? Am I awake?" At length, arrived at the house of his friend, John Mark, just as the little society were rising from their knees, &c. their prayers were turned into praises, as they gazed upon him, supposing it to have been his angel, I hear him exhort-

ing, "Cast all your care upon him, for he careth for you."

Let us refer to history. Were the history of the church well written, (but nothing is worse written,) it would be so many records of God's kindness. A few striking instances of it have been preserved. One shall serve for quotation. In that period of Christian barbarism, rendered infamous in a neighbouring country by the revocation of the edict of Nantz, when the blood of the saints was shed without measure—(since then God has given that nation blood to drink)—some of those persons employed in the diabolic work of persecuting to death, under the name of heretics, their unoffending neighbours, were sent in pursuit of the celebrated Du Moulin, a minister of eminence among the Protestants. They had long sought for him in vain, when at length they traced him to a house, and followed immediately his steps into it. Every corner of this house they searched, an oven excepted; which he who can employ on the designs of his mercy an insect as well as an angel, had rendered, by means of a despicable spider, the secure asylum of his servant. A web just thrown over its mouth prevented scrutiny, and thus Du Moulin was preserved! God "careth for him."

You say these instances are *extraordinary*. True; what then may we not expect when his care can be evinced by *ordinary* means? But why do I appeal to Scripture, and to history? Are none of you instances of this care? What say you? Methinks, if the decorum of this service admitted, one would rise and say, "The Lord is my shepherd—he maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me beside the still waters." Another would add, "He hath led me by a way that I knew not; he hath made crooked things straight, and rough places plain before me." And a third would state, referring to some particular deliverance, "In that day the light was neither clear nor dark, but it was a day known to the Lord, not day nor night; but it came to pass, that at evening time it was light." "He careth for you."

We may carry the subject farther, and

though the point has been established generally, enter a little more at large into particulars. His care extends to

*Your property.* This may, indeed, be but little, and for the reason I am assigning, because God "careth for you;" for "the cattle upon a thousand hills are his," and so are "the wool and the flax, the silver and the gold," and he has promised to "withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly." But little as it may be, without him flames shall not consume it, thieves shall not steal it, nor bankruptcies waste it. In proof of all this, I need only refer to the well known history in the first chapter of the book of Job. "There was a day," says the historian, "when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job?" He needed not information, but he would have the avowal from Satan's own lips. "Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job serve God for naught? Hast thou not set a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?" Observe these words, "*a hedge*"—impenetrable even by the devil; and before Satan could touch one of Job's camels, or even a single ewe lamb, God must make a breach in this hedge! And is he not a hedge round his people now? He is "*a wall of fire*" round about them, and the glory in the midst of them." "He careth for"

*Your families.* Is it necessary to prove this? I appeal to the ark, where a shameless Ham is floating among the wrecks of the deluged world, preserved for the father's sake. I refer to the history of Lot. "Hast thou here," said the angel who was about to inflict righteous judgment upon Sodom, "Hast thou here any besides, sons in law or daughters? Get them out of this place; for I can do nothing till ye be come yonder." I refer —; but there is no need to multiply evidence. "The mercy of the Lord is

upon them that fear him from one generation to another." To trace descent from a religious ancestry is a greater honour, a greater happiness than to be able to look up through a long genealogical line of nobles and heroes, to loins enthroned. Children of religious parents! why are you spared and blessed? Why are not some of you in hell? You had praying, holy, exemplary parents, and God "careth for" them; and as he loved the tree, he has extended mercy towards the branches. And though those branches have been long barren, when justice has threatened their excision, he has interposed, and said, "Destroy it not; a blessing is in it; for my servant's sake, I will not destroy them all." Dare you repeat the question, Why is the fruitless branch spared? A father's prayers, a mother's tears are in it. Parents! you have perhaps wept, prayed, and waited, until you at length despond. After most consistently discharging your duty, you appear to have laboured in vain. But "though your house be not so with God, yet hath he made with you an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." What, if the principles you early implanted be effaced, and your children having plunged headlong into crime, seem callous to reproof; is their case therefore, hopeless? Behold Manasseh, immured in prison in Babylon, the iron entering into his soul! He is reflecting on the sins of his life, and the "guide of his youth;" he prays, "O God of my father!" and the Lord is entreated of him.

He "careth for" *your bodies*. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." Pain may invade, sickness waste the pale frame, but "in all your afflictions he is afflicted." If the sun of your prosperity be darkened by the thickening tempest, and during the storm your friends desert you; here is "a friend born for adversity;" a friend that "sticketh closer than a brother;" a friend whose language to you is, "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee." But, "dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." And what is so humbling as a dying scene! There the strength is prostrated, and the flesh wasted; the bones "stare

upon you;" the eyes are sunken in their sockets; the faded visage is hectic and wan. The children, the wife stand around weeping; but I open the Bible, and read, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the *death* of his saints." Here the care of the most tender friend becomes unavailing. Even Abraham is heard to say, "Give me a place that I may bury my dead out of my sight." But God "careth" even for their dust. We may cherish an affectionate remembrance; the little tokens of their esteem we may fondly review; the books they scanned we may read with fresh interest; we may even go to the grave, and weep there,

"Whilst busy meddling memory,  
In barbarous succession, musters up  
The past endearments of our softer hours,  
Tenacious of its theme."

But they "are dead; we shall go to them—they shall not return to us." They are dead; "we cannot bring them back." *We* cannot; but God can, and he will do it; for "he that raised up Jesus from the dead, shall raise us up also by Jesus;" and not a particle necessary to our identity shall be forgotten or lost.

*Our souls* are his chief care; and nothing so much requires it. Its high destination stamps the soul with incalculable worth; and its moral condition designates it an object of pity. A few years only have elapsed since our souls were lit into being; but they are destined to burn on for ever; and through eternity blaze among cherubim and seraphim, or darkly twinkle amid the gloom of infernal night.

"The sun is but a spark of fire,  
A transient meteor in the sky;  
The *soul*, immortal as its sire,  
Shall never die."

But every human soul is darkened by ignorance, polluted by sin, and enslaved by Satan; "shapen in iniquity." "And wilt thou turn thine eyes to look upon such a one?" Brethren, he *has* done it. Already have you felt "the bright shining of his countenance" upon you. He *will* do it. All his other care is subservient to this. Cares he for your property, for your bodies, for your families? Their connexion with your *soul* raises them to

that pre-eminence. Want you more evidence? Behold the *price* at which he has redeemed your souls; "not corruptible things, but the precious blood of Christ." Recollect the pains he has taken to make them his own. Advert to the precious promises on which he has caused them to ground their trust. Look forward to that "exceeding and eternal weight of glory" which he has prepared for their enjoyment; and then read the text, "*he careth for you.*" Yes! he will purify them fully to himself, and preserve them from falling. He will "keep that which we have committed to him," and, finally, "present us faultless before the throne of his glory." And,

*Thirdly*, WHAT IS THE IMPROVEMENT THAT SHOULD BE MADE OF THIS DOCTRINE? I cannot enter into this inquiry at any length.

It is highly important that we *ascertain whether or not we are interested in this doctrine*. We have said, many are careless about God; we have restricted the text to those who have attached themselves to his interests; who "know God, or rather are known of God." And should not your *first* improvement of this subject be a serious inquiry into the concern you have in it? Are you illuminated? Born again? Have you "obtained mercy?" Are you sanctified by the Spirit through belief of the truth? To such who can satisfactorily reply to such questions, I would say, "Hail! ye highly favoured of the Lord." "He careth for you," who is infinitely *wise*, knowing the end from the beginning, and what, among all possibilities of occurrence, is best for you: who is infinitely *powerful*; doing "according to his own will among the armies of heaven, and the inhabitants of earth;" making "the wrath of man to praise him, and restraining the remainder," and who, therefore, cannot be thwarted in his attempts to serve you; who has already manifested his *beneficence* in a thousand acts of kindness, and emboldens the expectation of future mercy, by the recollection of past. Your circumstances may be afflictive; your comforts may have been shed around you like the leaves by the winter's frost; one trouble

may succeed another, as wave impels wave. In the misconduct of relatives, in personal sufferings, in secular embarrassments, you have continual cause of solicitude. You sometimes look tremblingly along the vale of death; but amid all, bear this upon your mind, "*HE CARETH FOR YOU.*"—"Happy are the people that are in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

This doctrine has a *moral bearing*, and we may deduce from it *our duty*. I seldom think of the text, without associating it in my mind with a passage in the Old Testament, and which forms part of a history which is soon told. The prophet Elisha, in his itinerating labours, visited Shunem. Here he was heard by "a great woman," whose heart became penetrated with the truth; and nothing could more naturally follow, than the desire to entertain the honoured messenger of salvation. In concurrence with her husband, she immediately prepared a little chamber for the prophet's accommodation. One day, when he visited there, he said to his servant, "Go call the Shunemite," who presenting herself at the prophet's door, he addressed—"Seeing thou hast cared for us with all this care, what shall be done for thee?" She had looked for no remuneration, nor would she accept any. I admire this; but I also admire the prophet's gratitude—"Seeing thou hast cared for us with all this care, what shall be done for thee?" Who is not applying, in this language, to God? Come, my brethren, shall I humbly, in your name, propose the question, "Seeing thou hast cared for us with all this care, *what shall be done for THEE?*" He replies, "My son, *give me thine heart.*" You say he has it. What, every corner of it? Let us put the question again—"Seeing thou hast cared for us with all this care, what shall be done for thee?" He answers from the excellent glory, "*Cast all your care upon ME.*"—"Cast thy burden upon the Lord; he will sustain thee." Ask you again, what shall be done? He has "left us an example that we should do as he has done." He hath "cared for you"—cared for your *fellow creatures*; he has cared for your *bodies*.

and "the poor ye have always with you, and when ye will, ye may do them good." Here is the orphan,

"For whom no mother's bosom  
Throbs to soft sympathy, and fond alarm."

And yonder,

"The wretched *widow* forc'd in age, for bread,  
To strip the brook with mantling cresses spread;  
To pick her wintry fagot from the thorn,  
Then seek some nightly shed, and weep till morn."

"Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness." And "when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, the King shall say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." He has cared for your *soul*, and by the character of that care, presented this as the noblest, best charity. Away with your sickly sentimentality, your "philanthropy born in a dream, bred in a novel, and living only in profession." Brethren, souls are perishing, and we must endeavour to save them. We have "freely received," we must "freely give." We must sigh and weep, but we must also pray and act. The gospel must be preached, and we must aid its promulgation. We must "join hands with God" to make a miserable world live. And, let it be known, that "he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

Before we part, may I speak a word to *you who are not fully interested in this subject*? How great your loss! how dangerous your condition! But there is yet hope. God has watched over your infancy, and brought you to manhood. He has raised you out of afflictions, and daily supplies your wants: and shall not "his goodness lead you to repentance?" "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." He has done more than swear it. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." O that this love might constrain

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you to drop your opposition, and apply to him for mercy! And why not *now*? For now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation! Trifle, and you are undone. . . . But I must conclude. May God add his blessing!

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THE MATTER, MANNER, AND SPIRIT OF A SERMON.

LET the matter be weighty and grave, the method plain and clear, the expression neither soaring on the one hand, nor too familiar on the other. Some men are not aware what contempt they draw on religion by their coarse and homely allusions, and the silly and trivial proverbs they make use of. Nor should our expressions be too soft or effeminate, nor our pronunciation affected or childish. Religion is a rational and manly thing; and we should strive to recommend it with the greatest advantage. But, above all, let us study a zeal and fervour, as, flowing from the deep sense of the thing we speak, and being regulated with prudence and decency, may be fittest to reach the *hearts* of the hearers. "The vulgar, that commonly sit under the pulpit, (as the excellent *Herbert* speaks,) are generally as hard and dead as the seats they sit on, and need a mountain of fire to kindle them." The best way is, to preach the things first to ourselves, and then frequently to recollect in whose presence we are, and whose business we are doing.—*Scougal*.

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ASCRIBE ALL SUCCESS TO GOD.

THOUGH we had the tongues of angels; though we had strength of intellect to grapple the most sublime and mysterious topics; though on the wings of meditation we could spring from the boundaries of this world, and hold converse with the skies; though with the most commanding eloquence, we could roll like the thunder, or be soft and sweet as the music of the spheres; still we must disclaim all praise;—still we must say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory."—*Parsons*.

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## SERMON XXXVI

### MINISTERS, AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST.

PREACHED AT ST. BRIDE'S CHURCH, LONDON, FOR THE CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

BY THE REV. H. BUDD, M.A.

*"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."—2 Cor. v. 20.*

Six thousand years of anguish and of groans are rapidly rolling away, and every Missionary Anniversary becomes more interesting. The world is rising from a state of torpid neutrality as to the effect of Missions. The Bible is producing a decided and universal impression. The three great divisions of the Christian church, the Greek, the Latin, and the Protestant; the Jews, yet beloved for the Father's sake; the Mohammedans, Ottoman, and Persian; and the immense population of the pagan world;—all these fields of spiritual culture prove that the share has not been applied in vain. The produce, indeed, has not been in all cases alike encouraging; but all demands a decided advance, and a fearless and persevering application of the remedy which God has so eminently placed at your disposal, for the restoration of a lost world. But "is not the Lord gone out before us?" What, then, has the minister to do but to stimulate your energies to corresponding exertions; and to urge you by a more ardent faith, and a more active charity, to the application of the great remedy God has provided for the healing of the nations? May He by his Spirit reveal its power to us! May we have a revelation of "the righteousness of God from faith to faith!" May it be a word of life to our own souls, and to those who dwell in the remotest regions of the earth! In the text are contained,

I. The Christian minister's designation.

II. The dignity of his character.

III. The subject of his embassy.

IV. The application of the subject to our present purpose.

And now, "Be thou exalted, O Lord, in thy strength! so will we sing and praise thy power." Here is

*First, THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER'S DESIGNATION.*

He is an ambassador of mercy; "we are *ambassadors for Christ*." An ambassador is the representative of his prince, sent to negotiate his affairs. He has chiefly to consider two things.

I. The Christian minister has to consider *the character of those to whom he is sent*. He is not sent to kings or princes; to the noble and rich, the refined or prudent; neither is he sent to the poor, the labourer, or the slave. He is sent to them *all*, as the general subjects of his charge; but he says with Paul, "We know no man after the flesh." It is the soul, the immortal soul, that is the subject of his charge; and whether it be found in the palace or the mansion, the streets or the highways, the night cellar or the peasant's cot, all need to be alike told—You have a soul to be saved! Neither is he sent to men as exhibiting the *nicer* distinctions of character. One man is civilized, another is learned; one is respectable, another is less so; one is

amiable, another is repulsive: these may all be alike destitute of Christ. If the man be decidedly "in Christ," he is "a new creature;" and now his distinction is, "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new!" Nor yet is he sent to men as exhibiting the broader distinctions of character: whether civilized or savage, learned or illiterate, in this state of society or the other, in this climate or the other; not to the elder son, proud in comparative innocence; or the younger son, lost in profligacy and misery: the natural disposition of both is alike enmity to God; there is no inherent spirituality in either. "All things" that tend to spiritual life "are of God," who by a method of his own, suited to every variety of human character, "hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ."

If, then, he be sent to no particular condition of men, to no peculiar distinctions of character; under what character is he to address mankind? simply as *sinners*. This is the universal character of man. "God hath concluded," shut up together, "all under sin." "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." All are rebels, guilty of foul revolt, found in open warfare against their God. "There is none that doeth good; no, not one." Neither natural, nor moral, nor artificial distinctions make any difference here: man, everywhere, at all times, under all circumstances, is found a sinner against God. You may collect specimens of earth from different countries; you may decompose them; but though they may differ in certain properties, they all agree in one,—they are material and perishing. In an army of rebels there may be every variety of character, but they are all rebels. Find man where you will; shape him as you may, by the line and plummet of civilization; yet no perfection of art, or attainment of science, can make him less than a sinner—a rebel against his God! It is to sinful man, then, "dead in trespasses," corrupt and impotent; to man, "without God in the world;" to man, the *Atheist*; that this ambassador is sent; and if he address man in any character short of this, he fails of his purpose, and makes

his embassy vain. He has mistaken the disease, and what wonder if the remedy fail? He is ignorant of the character he is sent to benefit, and what wonder if his embassy be unavailing? Here, then, is the firm foundation of all useful efforts on the part of the gospel minister; a deep conviction that man is a sinner against God. History, experience, the word of God, the character of Christ, and the feeling of the plague of his own heart, all go to prove to him that he is a perishing sinner, and that he is sent to perishing sinners with this embassy—"Be ye reconciled to God!"

It is evident, then, that such a minister cannot be the ambassador of the *LAW*. The law demands strength, and the sinner is weak; the law demands unceasing obedience, but the sinner disobeys in all; the law never did, nor can, make the imperfect perfect. In paradise, it proved that man could not stand in his own strength; and it was not given on Sinai because man was holy, but to restrain unholiness: its numerous precepts multiplied sin and aggravated the offence. "By the law is the knowledge of sin," for "sin is the transgression of the law." Apply the rule of the law to a rebel in arms, and it is the exhibition of his offence, and the occasion of its repetition; or if he be conscious of the majesty of the authority he has violated, and the perfection of the law he has broken, this consciousness, without any idea of mercy, will only plunge him into despair, and terrify him with the justice of his punishment. Let the law act as a pioneer to prepare the way; but let the minister remember that he is not the ambassador of the law, but of Christ; to restore the love of the law, and to make its service "perfect freedom." He is not the magistrate, with his politic rule; he is not the statesman, with cabinet devices; he is not the legislator, with his civil code; he is not the prudent man, with his subtle schemes; he is not the orator, with his powers of suasion; he is not the poet, with sublime imagination; he is not the man of feeling, with his tenderness and melting sympathy; he is not Moses himself, fresh from communion with God, his countenance

shining, and the tables yet warm with the finger of God : not one of these, not all of these combined in one, will suit the character to whom he is sent. It is to man, *the sinner*, that he is sent ; not the partial, but the total sinner—not the impoverished, but the ruined—not to man hurt by sin, but to man dead in sin—not man to be mended, but new made—not to be rectified, but to be *created*. A principle not known to the world must be applied ; a message never thought of by man must be brought—a message suited to him as a miserable sinner—a message of mercy from his offended God, which can cleanse the guilt of sin from his conscience, and subdue the power of sin in his heart.

"Behold," then, in the sublime language of Isaiah, "behold !" not a prince, a statesman, a legislator, the wise, the moralist, the orator, the poet, the man of feeling—no, not Moses himself, but the Saviour adapted to the sinner—"my servant"—my Son, made flesh, "whom I uphold" in his character of Mediator—"mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth"—my chosen Redeemer, in whom my soul looks on man with complacency. "I have put my Spirit upon him"—the power to restore the souls of men to my image. "He shall bring forth judgment"—righteousness, "to the Gentiles." I have just suited his character to their wants. His meekness shall condescend to their frowardness, and cause him to adapt himself to their greatest weakness. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench ;" the perfection of man shall be in him. "He shall bring forth judgment unto truth ;" a righteousness which supplies every defect shall be in him. And as his meekness suits the infirmities of men, his perseverance suits their unwillingness, their contempt, and rejection of him. "He shall not fail, or be discouraged," but go on till men are fully justified ; and "the isles," the heathen, "shall wait for his law"—a law of pity and of grace. It is a Saviour man wants ; not a legislator, or philosopher, but "the *Prince of Peace*." It is mercy meeting correlative misery ; pardon pronouncing peace. God meets man as a miserable sinner, and meets

him with an unmeasured proclamation of mercy—"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." Let the worst sinner but accept this, and he has at once a new nature. "Thy sins are forgiven thee ; thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace." Let this message be effectually delivered to the soul by the Holy Spirit, and the work is done. The soul is inclined to its own best interests, and to those of man ; and it has power for the due exercise of all its obligations. This is the Christian minister's designation : he is an ambassador of mercy—he is a herald of grace. "*We are ambassadors for Christ*." This is just the character that our church expects in us, who are her ministers. When she sends us forth, her words are these ; "Consider with yourselves the end of your ministry towards the children of God, the spouse and body of Christ." It is not philosophy, or morality, or refinement, that she expects of us as the result of our ministrations, but that the people should be brought to "ripeness and perfectness in Christ." And do our attainments equal her requisitions ? The habits of life, our own hearts, the bias of education, the very moral atmosphere by which we are surrounded, are all against us. All these claim to be substitutes for Christ ; they are the false Christs, which exclude the genuine Christ from our own hearts and those of the people. And shall we retire from such a world as hermits ? or rather, shall we not retire, with Paul, into Christ, and seek to be found only in him ? As surely as we, who are the clergy, are filled with the Spirit of Christ, so surely shall we be efficient ambassadors and faithful missionaries. Let us be but missionaries for Christ *at home*, and missionaries for Christ *abroad* will not long be wanting.

And never let the missionary abroad forget his designation. He is an "ambassador for Christ." Here is his authority, his comfort, his support, his security, his reward. And as his title is an "ambassador for Christ," so let his voice be, "I will go in the strength of the Lord ; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." Consider.

*Secondly, THE DIGNITY OF HIS CHARACTER.*

His voice is that of his Master—his entreaty is that of his Saviour. "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you *in Christ's stead*." The dignity of his office is such, that we cannot magnify it beyond due bonds. His subjects are not those of nature or of providence: these are the business of men who are occupied in the affairs of time and sense. True, he is in the flesh, but he must live "by the faith of the Son of God." His affairs are spiritual, and connected with eternity. His voice may be feeble, but it is as the voice of God—the voice of God in its most winning form; for it is the voice of God incarnate—of Christ himself—of Christ still incarnate in the person of his minister—as Christ still in the flesh, inviting men to be reconciled to God. And the feeblest minister who is faithful to his charge, is entitled to say, "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you *in Christ's stead*."

How, then, is it possible to magnify our office too highly? We are commissioned by God and by Christ. "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God;" as instruments of spirituality; as "workers together with God." Who are the four beasts, or living creatures, before the mystical throne of Christ, but the ministers of the church, by whose vigilance, activity, and piety, the church's interests are to be promoted? Are they not stars in his right hand? are they not the jewels of his crown? for "the messengers of the churches" are "the glory of Christ."

But the minister is elevated as the man is depressed; as the man sinks, the minister rises. His excellency is seen as he is viewed distinct from talents and acquirements. The most distinguished minister on record was the most jealous of human attractions. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God: for I determined not to know any thing among you, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And my speech and my preaching was

not with enticing words of man's wisdom but in the demonstration of the Spirit;" and why? "that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." Brethren, where is the fastidiousness, and refinement, and exquisiteness of our modern pulpit here? He debases the man, that he may raise the minister; he exalts Christ on the depression of self; he elevates the Spirit upon the ruins of the flesh. Oh, the meanness of man, that would borrow a spark from nature, to light up the horizon of grace! Oh, where is the man who can take the crown from his own head—the crown of reputation, of talent, of power, of excellence—and lay it at the feet of Christ, and say, "O Jesus! thou alone art worthy!" O may Christ be elevated this day, and self destroyed! and may this prayer proceed from every heart—"Be thou exalted, O Lord, in thine own strength!"

Let the man be thus merged in the minister, and he rises to the highest dignity of his office. For "we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants, for Jesus' sake." The highest dignity of the minister of Christ is to be the servant of all: then he adapts himself to the case of all whom he beseeches in Christ's stead. The dungeons of the malefactor—the weakness of childhood—the fatuity of age—the obstinacy of ignorance—the repulse of savage ferocity—the opposition of malignant barbarism—and the cutting sneer of the nominal professor—he is prepared to meet and to conciliate. He becomes "all things to all men;" he beseeches, he solicits, he prays. His aim is to save the immortal soul; for this he cannot suffer too much, or stoop too low. The deepest humiliation of the Saviour was when he endured the death of the cross; and this was also his highest, his richest exaltation. The minister resembles his Lord, and his richest dignity is *humility*. "If any will be great among you, let him be your minister." "And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them." There is the minister of Christ! the feeling of a child is his proper feeling. If such be the designation, and such the dignity of

the minister of Christ, we are prepared to consider,

*Thirdly, THE SUBJECT OF HIS EMBASSY.*

This is, *the reconciliation of a sinner to God*.—"Be ye reconciled to God." His subject is suited to the state of men: "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." You are a sinner, but God is reconciled to you. Ours is a message of mercy; we do not ask you to reconcile God to you, either by your repentance or your faith, else we should drive you to despair. He has prepared all this for you, and we invite you to ask for it. We do not ask you to reconcile him to you: that he has done already, by a way in which he is at once "just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." All we ask is this: receive the boon—"be ye reconciled to God"—believe, and live.

The guilty sinner will reply, "But what must I do to be saved? My sins are numerous! How deep is their dye! how long have they been persisted in! What satisfaction must I make? "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" To these efforts, which contain an opposition in terms, God in mercy says, "Come now, and let us reason together." And this reasoning shall consist of one argument only, which shall meet all you can urge in opposition—a free pardon: a pardon for all your sins, however many, great, or long persisted in. "Though your sins be as scarlet," plain and glaring as scarlet under the noontide sun, "they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson," of a deep and blood-red dye, habitual and inveterate, "they shall be as wool." Boundless mercy! unfathomable grace! inconceivable love! Free pardon, and complete reconciliation! This, then, is our message—"Be ye reconciled to God." All things are ready, and wait your acceptance. Be ye reconciled to God the Father, Son, and Spirit.

1. Embrace *the love of the Father*. Reconciliation originates here. All are sinners; and it signally illustrates the richness of his mercy, that he loved us "when we were dead in sins." There is something plausible, something that we can comprehend, in a man dying for his

friend; this we can conceive of as possible. "But God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." While we were yet rebels, with the weapons in our hands, God said, even at such a moment, "It is peace." But mark the mode in which this love is displayed!—a mode which shows the strictest regard to justice, in connexion with love the most attractive. A Mediator is appointed; a Mediator who has the rich expression of all the perfections of the Godhead. Abstract excellence and perfection, essential wisdom, power, holiness, infinity, no creature can conceive of. But in the second person in the Godhead, we have a revelation of the perfections of Godhead, which we can comprehend sufficiently for his glory and our own good. Christ is "the word," who expresses the Divine mind—the Son, who represents the Father—the Image, which portrays his resemblance—the impression of his excellence, the brightness of his glory. Here, then, we see him as disposable grace. The Father contemplates man in him; in him he chooses man *before* time; and in him, in time, he orders his election, conversion, justification, sanctification; and at length, by glory, crowning this tissue of grace. Thus "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Here is the "great mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh!" Embrace, then, *the love of the Father!*

2. Embrace *the grace of the Son*. 1st. The grace of his person. In no other way can the sinner of himself approach God. The sword of flame turns every way to keep him back from the tree of life, and the blaze of Sinai fills him with terror. Man cannot approach to God; God therefore approaches to man in his Son. Jesus comes, and in his person unites the human and divine nature: he dwells at Nazareth, and has "a local habitation and a name." He lives, acts, thinks, as we do, yet without sin: he faints, weeps, agonizes, groans, dies! And is this the

*Agonists?* It is he, my Saviour and my God! 2d. Embrace the grace of his work. United to his person by faith, you are also united to his work. Faith identifies you with Christ, from the stable at Bethlehem, up to his throne on high. You are quickened in him—suffer in him—are crucified with him—die in him—rise in him, and ascend together “in heavenly places in Christ.” 3d. Embrace the Son in his offices. All grace is in him for the supply of all your wants. Do your souls droop under a sense of sin? Go and spread it before him who is at once the victim of the priest on the cross of Calvary. Are you weak and languid in prayer before God? Go to him who is your glorious intercessor. Do you want wisdom and knowledge? In Christ are “hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;” and he will teach you. It is the book of grace which reveals the meaning of the books of nature, of providence, of glory. Do you want repentance, the conquest of lust, power over every temptation? Christ is “a Prince and a Saviour,” exalted for this purpose. His sceptre can sway every sin, and beat down every enemy under your feet. To live by faith on the offices of Christ, is the richest experience—to live by faith by Christ and on Christ, is to receive “out of his fulness grace for grace.”

3. Embrace the fellowship of the Spirit. The Spirit dispenses the grace of the Son. “He shall glorify me,” says Christ; “for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you: all things that the Father hath are mine.” The excellencies of the Father are deposited in Christ, to be bestowed by the Spirit. The Father is the source of grace—the Son is the depository of grace—the Spirit is the actuary of grace. It is his to enlighten, to quicken, to restore, to exalt, to comfort, to purify, to uphold, and to seal you with the earnest of heavenly glory.

“Be ye reconciled, then, to God.” What a reconciliation is here! How simple, full, free, and complete! In Christ, Jehovah is yours—yours in all his fulness, and in all his power to salvation! To know this, is the very life and joy of the soul. You have “received the

reconciliation,” and you can say, “My beloved is mine, and I am his.” I close here by gathering up all in one expression—“*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with us all; and with every soul in the remotest corner of the world, now and for evermore! Amen.*”

If such is the Christian minister’s designation, dignity, and work—if his aim be to make known the blessings of the gospel of reconciliation; it seems obvious to ask, since there is so much “balm in Gilead,” and so able a “physician there, why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?” Why, in this nineteenth century of Christianity, why has the gospel of reconciliation produced such feeble, such contracted effects? We need not go far to solve this question. The world is not reconciled to its God, *because so little of this reconciliation is felt in Christendom itself; and so little is felt, it is to be feared, not because it has not been received, but because it has not been preached!* The history of the church abounds with unchristian errors; and where we find the gospel of reconciliation preached, it is rather mentioned as an exception to the surrounding error. But where is the gospel? Is it at the great marts of commerce and population? Is it at Rome—at Constantinople—at Alexandria? Doubtless, each had its Clement—its Chrysostom—its Athanasius; but the candlesicks are removed, and the gospel is not preached. And if the question be asked, why is Christendom sunk into Socinian and Infidel corruption? I can only answer, *because the gospel of reconciliation is not preached!*

But let us ask also, does the gospel of reconciliation produce what it ought in England? Does the sauvity of this gospel prevail in our manners, or the severity of the law? Is there the kindness, the meekness, the conciliation, the reconciling spirit, the holy courtesy, of a people in whom self is dethroned, and Christ is exalted? Is there the forbearance, and tenderness, and clemency, of a people reconciled to God, and saved by mercy? or is there not rather the excessive claim and rigorous exaction of duty, which speaks

the severity of the law? Are our children trained, not as the children of promise, but of nature? At the baptismal font, are not children required to fulfil promises made *for* them, without the application of the promises made *to* them? Is education the demand of duty, or the encouragement of privilege? Are we aiming to make men better by clemency? or is it not rather by the application of law and punishment? Are the acts of our legislature mild and clement, or awful and terrific? Are the resolutions of our Cabinets mere temporary expedients, or wise and liberal treatments?—are they not rather suited to punish for offence, than to allure to obedience? If, then, this be the complexion of things *among us*, in this nineteenth century of a perfect gospel, it is the most important question we can ask to ourselves—to the world—to the glory of God—to the empire of Christ—to the honour of the Spirit—to the success of the Missionary cause—what is the reason that society in England has not made a greater practical advance in gospel reconciliation? Shall I answer this question? I will do it by asking another;—Is the pulpit of the Church of England a pulpit of the law or the gospel, of reconciliation or of terror? Which is its character? “O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years—in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy!” We have arrived at,

*Lastly*, THE APPLICATION OF THE SUBJECT TO OUR PRESENT PURPOSE.

“*Now then.*” Will my reverend brethren in the ministry allow me, *first*, to address them? Christ has suffered, and has entered into his glory. He has been lifted up on the cross; he is lifted up to glory; and he now waits to be lifted up in every heart. For this purpose he has appointed us his ambassadors, and requires us to lift up his person, his work, his offices, as the one unceasing subject of our ministry. We are to be Missionaries to those around us, on the vast important concerns of their souls. We are to address all ranks, from the king to the peasant, and all characters, whether moral or profane, and to say to them all,

“Be ye reconciled to God.” The highest is not above our care; the lowest is not below it. It is not enough that they are moral, that they attend our ministry: it is not enough that being solicited and warned, they decline and reject: we act for souls, and for eternity. It is not *for us* to be angry, to be baffled, to retire disgusted, fainting, despairing: we want a mind like Christ—a benevolent boldness—a spirit undaunted, that will go on *hearing of no refusal, and not resting till they are saved.* We want to be filled with Christ: to have Christ in our studies, in our pulpits, in our hearts, in our whole intercourse; in short, we want the missionary *zeal*, that we may accomplish the missionary *purpose.* England stands in need of missionaries herself at this very hour, as well as any part of the heathen world. And it has been long my firm conviction, that *it is in vain to expect an efficient supply of Missionaries for foreign service, till we who are ministers of the church become Missionaries at home.* As ministers of the Church of England, we stand on no common ground. The world may refuse the decisions of our Cabinets, but she asks the communication of our grace. She requests—what? “Christ crucified.” As we feel Christ—preach Christ—live by Christ—and recommend Christ, so are we a benefit to the whole race of mankind. Yes; the ministers of England stand on high ground! They are, at this very hour, *the ministers of the world.* Do I need an apology, my reverend friends? If so, I find it in my text. I am an “ambassador for Christ;” and beseech you “in Christ’s stead.”

2. I would address myself to my *Missionary brethren.* I am not disposed to consider your work as different from our own. You leave, as Abraham did, your home, and go out, not knowing whither you go. Herein we differ; but, in addressing a Christless world, we differ but little. Gross superstition—false deities—senseless idolatry—ignorant sensuality—savage brutality—you may have to encounter: but *we* have the lust of the eye—false refinements—idolatrous devotion to what is wrong—and over-civilization—to encounter at home. If you have

barbarous idolaters to address, we have the devotees of a more dangerous idolatry. Self and Christ are every where opposed. If Satan reigns by means of an ignorant idolatry, he reigns also by means of a corrupted refinement. An "ambassador for Christ" is alike needed: the qualification is the same both for ministers at home, and for missionaries abroad;—they must "put on the Lord Christ."

3. I address *parents*. If we have a Missionary College, we want a Missionary *nursery* also. If you are Christian parents, you have already devoted your children to God; "to fight under the banner of Christ, against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto their lives' end." In the teeth of this engagement, are you seeking for them wealth, honour, distinction? Are you seeking the gratification of what you have vowed to renounce, or coveting what you have promised to suppress? or are you withholding them from God, to whom you professed to devote them? We want not examples of such resignation. "Oh, man!" said the dying Haliburton to his son, "if I had as many sons as there are hairs in your head, I would bestow them all to God. I would rather have you a Missionary and a martyr than a monarch!" And said the mother of the Wesleys, "Had I twenty sons, I should be glad to see them going as Missionaries, and should rejoice that they were so employed, though I should never see them more!" And what is said in commendation of Abraham? "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine *only* son, from me." And what are we who are now here but the fruits of that very act of faithful obedience; for we are part of his spiritual seed, and blessed in him. Or shall we carry the example still higher? "God so loved the world, that"—what? he made it? maintained it? blessed it? No; neither of these, nor all of these, were the "so," the intenseness of his love. He "so loved it, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And if He "spared not *his only* Son," what can his love now

withhold? "Shall he not with him, also, freely give us all things?" O Christian parents! if you have never felt that blessing as yet, may He, who has given his own Son for us, give you that faith to-night, which, in surrendering your children to God, divests you of all painful anxiety for them, and makes your happiness secure.

4. I must address *the young*. We look chiefly to you for our supply of Missionaries. Christ has conferred this chief honour upon you. How infinitely is this beyond all the other objects that can stimulate your ambition! In all the others, you are useful for time: in this you labour for eternity. Is holiness the truest happiness? is usefulness the brightest honour? is the work of saving souls from sin, and guilt, and wrath, the most worthy zeal and energy? Then is this work of a Missionary superior to all others. How poor are the achievements of Greek and Roman youths, recorded on the page of history, and celebrated by poets, compared with the labours of Paul! and may we not say of Brainerd, of Martyn, and of Heber also, who sought, above all besides, the good of others and the glory of their God?

5. I address *the great congregation*. Remember how you are encouraged to support this great work. I speak not of Bible Societies—or translations—or Missionary colleges—or of agents sent out to Mahomedans and Jews; I speak not particularly of any institutions established to benefit the bodies or the souls of men, and to spread the name of Christ throughout the world: but I speak of *the union of all these* at the present moment, as auguring better and more glorious days at hand. The prophecies are accomplishing—the prayers of the church for six thousand years are receiving their answer—prayer is still presenting, that Jerusalem may be made the praise of the whole earth—evangelical principles are spreading—amidst the pressure of the times, funds are not withheld—missionaries are offering themselves for the work—reconciliation to God is proclaimed, and the world listens to it; and success is by no means wanting. The heathen are crying out for help; and, remembering that "the weapons of



our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God," let us take courage, for surely "the Lord is gone out before us."

Let us remember also *our obligations*. "Freely we have received, freely let us give." Remember what you were; among the darkest of the nations: remember what you are; perhaps the most enlightened in the world. Six hundred millions of human beings are still sunk in darkness, and cry, "Come over, and help us!" Among these are more than a hundred millions of your fellow-subjects. Remember the value of but *one* soul, possessed of an eternal duration, and deprived of the glories of salvation during that eternity! Remember how little has *been* done, and how much remains *to be* done! Remember *where* you live, and *when* you live!—in England, and in the middle of the nineteenth century of Christianity: remember, too, *why* you live; and aim to honour Christ, and glorify God. Remember that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God." And remember that, with abundant promises of the Spirit's influence, God has eminently committed to you the gospel of reconciliation to a lost world.

But *are we prepared for this holy work?* Allow me here to speak plainly and unequivocally. We want a bolder avowal in our personal religion—in the family—the social circle—the magistracy—the legislature—the cabinet—but, above all, in the pulpit—"I am for Christ!" We want that zeal, that boldness, for the glory of Christ crucified, which shone in Cranmer, and Ridley, and Latimer, and Bradford, and Philpot, and others, the martyrs of the Reformation. Let us live and preach as they, and their success shall be ours.

We want unity also; both in the Established Church, and in the church of God at large. I should hail the union of all the efforts of the people of God, as a proof that God was indeed at work. The love of Christ can alone effect this. Let the love of Christ be paramount to human selfishness, and all seeming differences would appear "trifles, light as air," com-

pared with the cause of Christ, and his glory in the earth.

But is this all? Do we not want a greater manifestation of faith—of Christian holiness—of humility—of love—of deadness to the world—of less display in person, in furniture, in habits, in dress? Is all, in these respects, as it should be in men of God? Let the consciences of all reply!

We want a Christian education also. Here is the root of all our mischief! We have virtually forsaken the Bible, "the fountain of living waters; and have hewn out for ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." We give six days to Mythology, and scarcely one to the Bible; and then *wonder* that things are as they are. At the baptismal font we vow regard to the souls of our children, and then devote the whole of our attention to their temporal interests! And then, of course,

We want Missionaries. Why? Only consider the wants we have already named—a bolder avowal of the gospel—unity among the people of Christ—a Christian conversation—a Christian education. If we had these, we should have Missionaries, and the world might soon rejoice in the salvation of God.

In one word, brethren, are you "*reconciled to God?*" If so, you have given your hearts to God; and if he has your hearts, he has your *all*; your affections, your children, your money, your talents, your faculties of body and soul, are all His. Your prayers, your praises, your aspirations—all in nature, all in grace—are His. Do you love mankind, your friends, your children, yourselves? Love Christ, and you show the best love to them—serve Christ, and you serve them—advance the cause of Christ, and you advance their interests also. Christ, and all connected with Him, are alone immortal. Your money must pass away—your friends—your children—your estates—yourselves must pass away—"the world passeth away, and the lust thereof:"

"But fir'd his word, his saving power remains,  
Thy realm for ever lasts, thy own Messiah reigns."

## SERMON XXXVII.

### THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

BY THE REV. C. BENSON,

AT TEMPLE CHURCH.

*"But some men will say, How are the dead raised? and with what body do they come?"—*  
1 Cor. xv. 35.

Or all the doctrines which the gospel has brought to light, when making known to us that life and immortality which is purchased by the merits of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the most inexplicable to human reason is that of the resurrection from the dead, the reunion of the body and soul in another and a better world, where there will be no disease to weaken, and no death again to dissolve the connexion which will then be once more formed. The Grecian and Roman philosophers might have some faint notion of a future state, in which the soul would either be happy or miserable for ever, according to the merits of the being in whose vile tabernacle it dwelt on earth. But that future state was to consist, in their view, not of another union to the body, but in a complete and permanent separation from the bondage of the flesh, from pain, and suffering, and decay. They looked upon the body as the prison and the degradation of the soul; and conceived its only hope of felicity to be placed in an emancipation from its dungeon of earthliness. Nor have the deists, in the latter days, ever conceived a doctrine of a different kind: they have deemed it necessary to disembody the spiritual part of man in order that it might be happy for ever.

But the doctrine of Christianity is of a different character; it promises to man a perfection and an eternity of happiness both in body and soul: it tells the disciple of the gospel that as he is now so he

will be hereafter—a compound of matter and spirit; and that the same being who on earth is faithful to his Saviour will, in heaven, be glorified by that Saviour; that he who disbelieves or disobeys his Lord's will, in the same form in which he sinned in this state of pilgrimage, be condemned to everlasting and unavailing anguish in the appointed state of retribution. This was the promise of Jesus to his followers; and to illustrate and confirm that promise, he himself burst the bands of death, and showed himself alive after his passion to his various disciples, and after forty days ascended visibly with his body into the heavenly regions. He had declared to them, not only that where he was they should be also, but as he was they also should become. Now, they had beheld him mounting up into heaven; into heaven, therefore, they themselves, also, were to obtain an entrance. They had beheld him carrying up thither the body in which he had walked with them, and talked with them, during the course of his earthly ministry: with the same body therefore with which they had accompanied him—with the same eyes which had looked on him—with the same ears that had heard him—and with the same hands that had handled him, they themselves were to follow him into the heavenly places, and become the companions of angels, principalities, and powers. It was a glorious doctrine; and, convinced of its truth by every necessary testimony to their senses,

and every reasonable reliance upon the Saviour's words, they went forth and preached Jesus and the resurrection, as the two fundamental principles of the religion of the gospel. But it was one of the most wonderful and unexpected doctrines, and many who embraced the faith of Christ were yet often dwelling on its singularity; and, with a vain and useless effort to clear up the whole mighty mystery, were often asking the questions of the text, and confounding both themselves and their teachers, by demanding how the dead shall be raised up, and with what body shall they come.

It is not to presume to answer these inscrutable questions in the fullest extent that I have chosen these words for the subject of our present consideration. The event alone can tell us the means and the mode by which God will operate this astonishing renovation of the whole human race: and, in a question so confessedly beyond the reach of man's present faculties, it is far better to leave the solution of the wonder to the appointed time.

But there is one sense in which every Christian may be allowed to adopt the questions of the text; and that is in the scriptural sense. Every one may, and, if he duly esteem and make it his study and delight, he will and ought naturally to inquire what the Scriptures themselves have taught us concerning the manner and the order in which the dead shall be raised up, and the nature of that body with which they will come out from their graves. This is the information which we may legitimately seek; and I will, therefore, in the remainder of this discourse, endeavour to lay before you a few of the leading and undoubted circumstances which may be gleaned from the different portions of the apostolic writings concerning the resurrection of the dead.

The first point which is most forcibly laid down is, *The universality of this reunion of the body and soul.* It is not a favour reserved only for the redeemed who will be called out from the chambers of the dead to enjoy, in body and spirit, the reward of that obedience which they have paid to God both in body and

spirit; while the faithless and impenitent, the extortioner and adulterer, the worldly-minded and the lover of pleasure and folly, will be left to slumber on for ever in the unconsciousness of the grave. The wicked sometimes hope that, but they cannot hope with any foundation in the Scriptures. *All* that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall awake; some, indeed, to everlasting glory, but some to everlasting shame and contempt. "There will be a resurrection," says the apostle, "both of the just and of the unjust." And while the bodies of the saints shall inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the beginning of the world; the flesh of the ungodly shall rise to live for ever likewise, and living to find for ever the worm that dieth not, and burn for ever in the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Whatever be the meaning of these similitudes, doubtless they are similitudes of an anguish of a most fearful nature; and doubtless it is an anguish which will fall at the resurrection both upon the bodies and upon the souls of the ungodly. Remember the recompense due for the misdeeds of the body when united to the spirit. It is well that we should ever bear engraven on our memories this thought: because the Bible, when it speaks of the resurrection, speaks so constantly, and so much more copiously, of what will be the fate of those who are saved through Christ, than of those who are lost and condemned, that we may be liable to lose the awakening recollection of what horrid sufferings will then fall upon the wicked.

The second assurance which we derive from the word of God concerning the manner of the resurrection is this—that *it will be instantaneous as well as universal.* At one time—at one sound—by one act of almighty power, the whole mass and multitude of sleepers shall awake. Death does his work of desolation by successive changes: his conquests are slow and gradual; and generation after generation, and man after man, are bowed down at his unwelcome bidding. But the Lord of life will declare his superior and irre-

sistible might, by breaking at once the bonds of all who have been the conqueror's captives. It is not because the first parents of the human race were the earliest who tasted the bitterness of dying, that they will therefore be the earliest to taste the sweetness of reviving. It is not because Abraham and Isaac, and the prophets, are dead, and have mouldered some thousands of years ago, that they will therefore spring up from the dust with a proportionable priority of time, before all their children who have since fallen victims to the same law of mortality. There is one—and but one—hour appointed for the sea to give up the dead that are in it, and death and hell to give up the dead that are in them, and the forest and the wilderness, and the sepulchre to restore the bones of the bodies which were intrusted to their keeping. In that hour the patriarchs and prophets of the world, before and after the flood—the kings and the subjects of Babylon and Rome—the disciples of Moses and of Christ, however separated from each other by the difference of time and place, by the first birth, will spring up in this second generation the sons of the same day, contemporary children of the general resurrection. "For the trumpet shall sound," says the apostle, "and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, the whole valley of dry bones will be revived; bone will come to his bone, and sinews bind them, and flesh cover them, and spirit be breathed into them; and they shall all become, what they once were, living, moving things—all at the last trump, and not one shall be wanting.

But "behold," says the apostle, to whom we are indebted for almost all our dim conceptions of the future world, "behold, I show you a mystery," a circumstance which reason could not have attained, and for which we are wholly indebted to the revelation of the Spirit of God. That mystery is this:—All will not sleep; all who are dead will rise at once, but all will not die, and, therefore, all will not be placed under the necessity

of rising again. Those who are alive and remain on the earth as its inhabitants—and it is clear that some must so live and remain when the general resurrection takes place—shall none of them sleep, as other men have done, in the dumb forgetfulness of the grave; but they shall all be changed; a change will pass over them equivalent to death and the resurrection, but death and the resurrection they will not literally know. Nor will even this wondrous and momentary change happen to them until all the rest of mankind have been revived into everlasting existence.

The whole process of this singular operation is distinctly recorded in the last verses of the fourth chapter of the first Epistle to the Thessalonians. "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord"—mark how solemnly he brings forward this statement—"This we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent," or go before, "them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." It is a wonderful scene which those men will behold—it is a wonderful thing to which they will be subject. And an imagination, even of the duller cast, can scarcely help forming unto itself some picture of the strangeness of the event, and the awfulness of the feelings with which it will be contemplated.

We are in search of truth and profit, not of ideal representations: and having, therefore, seen in some measure how the dead are raised—having seen that there will be a contemporaneous resurrection of the bodies of all the dead, both of the just and of the unjust, in one appointed day; and that, after all the dead have been raised, there will next pass a change on the bodies of the living; let us proceed to examine with what bodies the dead will rise, and with what bodies the

living will be caught up into the air to meet the Lord.

First of all, then, we are taught that at the resurrection there will be a modification in the bodies, or rather in the attributes of the bodies which we bear with us on the earth; for, as all flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds; so also, says the apostle, is the resurrection of the dead. As the nature of the living body of one class of created beings differs from the living body of another class of created beings, so also does our present body of clay differ from that with which we shall be clothed when brought forth from the grave to an eternal existence. The nature of this change in general the apostle thus describes:—"The Saviour, when he shall appear, will not only call up our vile bodies from the grave, but so change them that they shall be no longer vile, but become like unto his own glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself." Nor is the apostle content with this single and general intimation on the subject; he has pursued it into a variety of the most interesting particulars; he has given us every degree of information which it is necessary to possess.

Our body, when it dies, he tells us, in the first place, "is sown in corruption:" it is the heir of death, the daughter of the earth, and the sister of the world; a vessel of clay, with the principle of dissolution bound up in its very essence, and the sentence of mortality written on its brow. It is to be raised in incorruption, without the possibility of being either crushed by violence, or worn away by suffering, with the germ of life planted in its centre, and springing up into a continual renewal of its vital powers, free from the decay of death, unchanging and unchangeable.

Our body will, it is added, be sown "in dishonour." It is a body which hath its shameful and less honourable parts, as well as its more noble and dignified members. It is subject to deformities which make it hideous—to losses and defects

which make it useless—and it is a state of wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores. In its most beautiful state the body has some uncomeliness, and its best honours fade and depart with youth, and turn into the wrinkles of wretchedness and age. But it will be raised in glory—the glory of unblemished righteousness, and the unspotted loveliness of a perpetual spring; and also in the ethereal and eternal charm of an angelic purity. It will be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, a delight to every eye that looks upon it; walking like our first parents in the paradise of God, naked, but not-ashamed; without one dishonourable member, without one dishonourable infirmity.

Our body, when it dies, is sown as it had lived, in weakness, in utter inability to labour without weariness in any work, however good or great. The body is in its power unable to fulfil the grand and lofty desires of the understanding; weak it is to obey the holier aspirations of the soul. The mind museth upon many things in its activity and strength—the body weigheth down in its musings. The spirit searcheth even the deep things of God; but the languid incapacity of the sluggish flesh is unable to sustain the weight of its desires. The mind can do many things; but the weakness of the body hindereth. It circumscribes my longings after wisdom—checks me in my pursuits after truth. I would go and find wisdom in the uttermost parts of the earth—my body is weak in motion. I would search for hidden treasures day and night—my body is weak in watching. I would penetrate the deepest mysteries by the energy of unbroken meditation—my body is feeble, and its feebleness must be renovated. It is the same also in my pursuits of holiness. Suppose the mind forms the image of a great and godly enterprise for God's glory and man's welfare; then the living portion of strength fails, and the heart faints, ere half the task of holiness has been accomplished. It is a feeble and unready instrument of the will, ever disappointing our best wishes, and leaving our best ideas unfulfilled. But it will not ever

be thus. It is sown in weakness—it will be raised in power: its capacities of activity and endurance of motion will fly from one end of heaven to the other at the bidding of our good intentions, and feel no decay of strength, never be weary in well-doing, and never sink under the burden.

Lastly, says St. Paul, the body that dies is “sown a natural body,” the source of all fleshly natural lusts, and the seat of all earthly natural passions. But the body of the natural man is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; for the flesh of the natural man lusteth always against the Spirit, and mindeth earthly things. But it will be raised a spiritual body—spiritual, and therefore holy in all its feelings, desires, and wants: the ever living, never failing instrument of obedience to the will of the spirit.

There is but one other particular to be mentioned, and that is, that though the body of every redeemed Christian will at the resurrection be risen up, the glory will not be equal in all. The stars in the firmament on high shine not all with an equal lustre, or with an equal force: the beams of some are faint and feeble—the glow of others powerful and bright; yet the shining of them all, however pure and powerful in the darkness of night, is lost before the coming splendour of the great luminary of day. When the sun rises on the earth, the stars get them away together, and their beautiful brightness is perceived no more. And thus also will it be, as we are taught by the apostle, with the bodies of the saints when called from the grave to walk their everlasting rounds upon the face of God’s heavenly firmament. Some will have a higher and better glory, and some will have an humbler bliss. The glory of the most glorious of all the stars will dwindle, decay, and fall disregarded in the presence of the superior excellency of the Lord Jesus, the sun of righteousness, the ruler of the heavens and everlasting day. So are we taught by the apostle Paul when he says, “that as there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; and as one star differeth from another star in

glory—so also shall be the resurrection of the dead.”

Blessed be the Lord Jesus, that he hath inspired the apostle to make known to man these circumstances; for had we not known them, had we been left to imagine that any single portion of the folly and infirmities of this life would have clung to us in another life, we should have looked on the one doctrine of the gospel with dread rather than joy. It would have been a melancholy prospect to have thought that in eternity we should have borne about with us a body subject in the slightest degree to our present wants and weariness. Yet that may, perhaps, be a portion of the punishment of the wicked in a future life. And be it well remembered that in all that Scripture saith concerning the changes of the resurrection, it speaks only of the bodies of the redeemed: it passes over what will happen to those who will then stand at the left hand of the Lord with a carelessness, a sort of contemptuous silence for them. Therefore we are still left to apprehend that there will be no ameliorating change wrought upon their bodies by the resurrection, save the change from mortal to immortal. They will then, if that be the case, still be the victims of all the sufferings, sorrows, and wretchedness of this earthly state; and they will carry with them, as their everlasting curse, an incorruptible corruption—a weakness too strong to sink into dissolution—perpetual dishonour—lusts that cannot find exercise—diseases that have no hope of death. This will be their portion, to drink for ever the miseries of earth with the eternity of hell. Sad contrast of their own thorns in the flesh and the glorified and sanctified bodies of the redeemed.

Such are the answers that Scripture enables us to give to the questions of the text; such the manner and order in which we are taught the dead will be raised; such the bodies with which we may expect they will rise. What, then, is the lesson of profit we may derive from this consideration?

The first is that of a warning to prepare for this awful change. If there will

be indeed a rising again both of the just and of the unjust—and if even after death the body as well as the soul will be made to inherit the reward of its deeds, how holy should we become in all manner of conversation and godliness. For it is no half measure of retribution which we shall receive; the same man that sinneth, the same being in flesh and spirit shall be in eternal misery or joy. We have here, therefore, a rule and a line by which to calculate the amount of our punishment or our recompense. We know well what it is to rejoice in the days of our youth, in the sunshine of the heart, and the energy of the bodily powers. We know equally well what it is in sickness and sorrow to endure, though it be but for a single night, the anguish of a wounded spirit united to the pains of a diseased body. We have only to extend the duration of these enjoyments or sufferings from time to eternity; and, behold, we have before us a picture of Christian retribution such as will, and such as is most of all adapted to work upon our minds and hearts; intelligible in its nature, and therefore powerful as a motive; not vague nor imaginative, and therefore neither visionary nor curious.

But there is another peculiar class of duties to which this doctrine more particularly persuades; and there is one peculiar class of sins from which it more especially guards us: I mean the sins and duties of our fleshly members. "I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to the Lord." So speaks the apostle, alluding more particularly to that great mercy of having our vile body changed, that it should be like to the glorious body of Christ, which he calls, especially, the redemption of the body. There is, truly, no other doctrine which can so forcibly exhort to the mortification of our members which are on the earth. And you find St. Paul continually using it: "Mortify therefore your members"—he has just been speaking of our being raised from the dead—"mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, idolatry"—and

all other fleshly lusts of the eye, the tongue, and the body. Why, what is the hope of the resurrection which I shall see? What is the nature of the change for which I am to prepare? It is that this poor pitiful frame, this tabernacle of clay which I bear about with me here on earth, the source of my pains, the fountain of my sorrows, the seat of disease, and the heir of death—it is that even this wretched frame shall spring up from its dust, throw aside its dishonour, forget its weakness, be purified from all the dregs of its earthly corruption, rise from the dead, ascend up into heaven with Christ, who is gone before; and there stand, the fellow of angels, before the throne of God. Glorious hope! mysterious exaltation!

What reward, then, shall I give to the Lord for his mighty marvellous loving-kindness to this earthly body? These eyes, if they be admitted into heaven, will look upon the holiness of the Lamb—will see the brightness of his glory—marvel at the majesty of his Deity—and almost be blinded in the excessive glories of the heavenly host. Shall I, then, fix these eyes upon the vain and unholy objects of the earth? And shall I fill them with intemperance, cruelty, lust, and so unfit them for the contemplation of the spiritual splendour of God's unblemished purity? These ears—they are hereafter to listen to the harps of the angels, to hear the unceasing songs of gratitude of the redeemed; shall I turn them away, then, from this their holiest and most honourable occupation, and bid them drink in with greedy readiness the tempting accents of the charmer who would charm me from the ways of righteousness? Or shall I let them unhallow my soul by being open to the deceitfulness of that philosophy which would take away my heart, and destroy its delicacy by listening to the voice of wit and jesting, and licentious thoughts? Shall I take the members which are predestined to the holy office of serving before God's unblemished throne, and make them the members of a harlot, the instruments of uncleanness, and the slaves of vice and licentiousness? Shall this tongue which is hereafter to cry out with all the saints,

"Glory and blessing, honour, and praise be for ever and ever to the Lamb that sitteth on the throne"—shall I degrade my tongue by lying, by deceit, by licentious conversation? Shall that which is intended for a blessing in heaven, be made on earth the instrument of cursing? Shall these hands, which are to be lifted up to God in his holy place, be taught the ways of wickedness, of theft, and murder, and cruelty, and revenge on earth? Shall these organs of life, which are to eat and drink in the presence of the Lord, be corrupted with gluttony and drunkenness? Shall any one part of that body which shall hereafter converse with angels, which hath been honoured with the indwelling of the Divinity which now rules in heaven—shall that body be converted into a temple of God's worst enemy, and of man's worst enemy, and the worst enemy of all that is happy and good—the prince of darkness, the author of misery, and of all that is miserable, and vile, and guilty, and to be despised? God forbid. The body is to be the Lord's; and, as the body is to be the Lord's, let it glorify the Lord. Let me be doing while I can, and as long as I can. Fasting is hard; yet, if meat offend my God, I will eat no meat as long as I live. If he require chastity, I will give it. If he ask temperance, I will check my appetites: if purity, why I will even close my eyes, lest they should look on the cause of temptation. In all things, since God has given us such a glorious hope, I will endeavour to sanctify myself, through grace, for the great end of my calling, the entire devotedness both of my body and soul, that both my body and soul may be fitted to stand up in his holy presence, being justified, washed, and glorified by the blood of my Saviour, Jesus Christ.

## CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY.

A MISSIONARY arises amongst his fellows almost like the denizen of another sphere: home, and country, and kindred,

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all are comparatively forgotten. He hath heard tidings of distant provinces over which superstition rolls her chariot wheels, red with the blood of human sacrifice—he hath listened to the recital which speaks of tribes and multitudes passing into eternity, darkly and cheerlessly as the beasts that perish—he hath spread before him the map of the world, and he hath dissected it into moral partitions, and he hath wondered and he hath wept, when taught that Christ, who died for the sins of the dwellers in *every land*, is known and believed on only in scanty and scattered districts, and all this hath agitated and convulsed his spirit—all this hath conspired to annihilate the ties of former citizenship, to link him in brotherhood with the benighted and degraded of his race—and he snatches up a banner, and emblazoning thereon simply the *name of Jesus Christ*, leaps upon the waters, and hastens to erect the standard amid polar snows or arid sands, in the valleys and on the mountains of secluded and scarce accessible domains.

*An unregenerate minister!*—there may be such a thing. An unregenerate missionary! I dare not, (knowing that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,) I dare not say there *cannot* be such a thing; but certainly it would be in no slight degree difficult to determine the *motives* which actuate an unregenerate missionary—to develop the secret springs of a conduct so opposed to all the dictates and desires of a carnal spirit—and if it be a positive case that a man, not converted himself, should engage, by the surrender of whatsoever is dearest to the natural heart, in the work of converting others, we have a new case to add to the catalogue of anomalies and phenomena whose solution must be left amid the hopeless desiderata of moral science. I can suppose no other principle actuating a missionary, save zeal for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; he is *not* a missionary unless this principle arouse him and nerve him.—*Melville*.



## SERMON XXXVIII.

### THE GLORY OF THE LATTER HOUSE.

BY THE REV. J. GRANT.

*"The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts; and in this place shall I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts."—Hag. ii. 9.*

God having called Moses to a conference with him on Mount Sinai, imparted to him specific and minute instructions for the building of a tabernacle, or pavilion in the wilderness, as the peculiar habitation of the divine glory. By this *glory* is here meant the *Schechinah*, or bright cloud, emblematic of his immediate presence and protection, which hovered over the Holy of holies. When it was appointed by God that the army, or host of the Israelites, should march from one station in the wilderness to another, this luminous column or glory, slowly rose into the air, and moved before them in silent and mysterious majesty, till it arrived at the stage where the camp was to be pitched, when it stooped again upon the mercy-seat, and thus gave the signal to halt. When the fiery pillar rose, the whole multitude bearing the ark, amidst the announcements of trumpets, and the waving of emblematic banners, set forward singing and shouting, in the first words of the sixty-eighth Psalm—"Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him." And when the mist-robed intelligence—the divine presence stopped—the army obeyed the notice, and welcomed the descending Jehovah, as they deposited their burthens, with the words, "Return, O God, to the many thousands of Israel." Hence God is said to be the leader of his people: hence in the promises which Isaiah makes to Israel, if they will turn unto God with a fast of sincerity and charity, it is said, "Thy righteousness shall go before thee, and the glory of the Lord"—the divine

presence—"shall be thy reward." Innumerable passages might be adduced, containing the same allusion to the translucent column, the internally illuminated cloud, the glory, the presence of Jehovah. This portable tent accompanied the people in all their journeyings; and after their arrival in the promised land, it was pitched in Shiloh, a city situated on a hill, in the tribe of Ephraim, and the name of which was prophetic and typical. Here it remained for many years, till in consequence of the vileness of the sons of Eli, the ark of the covenant was taken in battle, and carried into the cities of the Philistines. As this ark was the encasement of the gem, the chief article of furniture in the moveable temple, being that on which the divine presence rested, the disconsolate widow of Phineas gave to her posthumous child the name of Iehabod, signifying, that "the *glory*," or divine presence, "was departed from Israel." On the restoration of the ark, and on the taking of Jebus, David erected a tabernacle, not like the former, made of pillars and boards of acacia wood, set in sockets of silver, but rather resembling a tent, in which the recovered ark, the pedestal and vehicle of the "glory," was deposited on Mount Zion; with the songs and dances of religious exultation. A procession typically representing the ascent of the Messiah, the King of glory, into heaven, after the conquest over his spiritual enemies.

Having thus introduced the subject, I shall now in the *First* place, consider and compare THE TWO PERMANENT BUILDINGS WHICH SUCCEEDED. And—

**Secondly, THE PROPHECY RELATIVE TO THE LATTER.**

David, in his zeal for the honour of God, was grieved, that he himself was accommodated in a palace of cedar, while the divine presence dwelt within curtains; and he accordingly made preparations for a magnificent and durable temple. God, however, would not permit him, a man of war and of bloodshed, to accomplish the undertaking in person, but it was completed with his costly materials in the subsequent reign of his son, Solomon, the peaceful and the magnificent. By the building of this stately edifice, consisting of stones hewn from the quarries, and cedar from the forests of Lebanon,

"For here fair science nursed her infant fire,  
Fann'd by the artist aid of friendly Tyre;  
Then tower'd the palace, then in awful state  
The temple rear'd its everlasting gate;  
No workman's steel, no ponderous axes rung,  
Like some tall palm the noiseless fabric  
sprung—

Majestic silence!"

By the building of this permanent structure, I say, an important promise was faithfully and fully performed. It was then that the Israelites were confirmed in the rest which they enjoyed after all their toils and journeyings; and a type was thereby afforded of the Sabbath and repose of heaven, to be enjoyed by the soul after its tabernacle, the bodily frame, shall have finished its wanderings through the dreary wilderness of life. "For we know," says the apostle Paul to the Corinthians, "that if our earthly house of this tabernacle," that is, our body, a perishable tabernacle of the immortal spirit; if this, I say, were dissolved by death, "we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" that is, our souls shall be clothed with an incorruptible and permanent body, fashioned after the likeness of Christ's glorious body.

When Solomon dedicated unto God this gorgeous edifice, rich with gold, silver, brass, precious stones, and olive wood; when he had finished all its courts, and porticoes, and altar, and molten sea, when he had assembled many priests to

celebrate the holy ceremony with vocal and instrumental music;

"When the harp awoke,  
The cymbal clang'd, the deep-tongued trumpet spoke."

When he had offered a sublime prayer, and immolated a prodigious number of victims,

"Then Salem spread her suppliant arms abroad,  
View'd the descending flame and bless'd the present God."

The personal Jehovah descended his radiant cloud, which filled all the house, as an emblem of his taking possession of it; and he likewise appeared in a vision of the night to Solomon, whom he assured that he had chosen that place for a house of sacrifice, and a home where his honour—his glory, should dwell. Accordingly St. Paul, in speaking of the Israelites, distinguishes them to those "to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the *glory*, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." And in his epistle to the Hebrews, he describes the first or legal covenant, as having a tabernacle, and candlestick, and table, and show-bread in the sanctuary, or holy place; and within the second veil, the holiest of all, having the ark of the covenant, and over it, the cherubim of "*glory*" covering the mercy-seat. This edifice was erected nearly five hundred years after the first pitching of the tabernacle in the wilderness. It subsisted upwards of four hundred years, when it was utterly demolished by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, who carried the Jews into his own country; and where they remained in captivity during seventy years, fifty-eight years only from the destruction of the temple. At the end of that period, Cyrus, king of Persia, who had recently made himself master of Babylon, permitted the Jews to return to their own country, (agreeably to the prophecy which had announced him by name,) and restored to them the sacred vessels and utensils of divine service, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away as spoils. In the second year, subsequent to the return of the first great detachment of Jews into

Judea, they began to clear away the ruins of Mount Moriah, and to lay the foundations of a new temple, which the Scriptures call "the latter house." The young men on this occasion rejoiced at the idea of worshipping, in a fane of their own, the God of their fathers, whose praises they had heard in their captivity, but whose grandeur they never witnessed. But the old men, who fifty-eight years before, remembered the temple of Solomon standing in its venerable magnificence, like an ancient oak, whose trunk is enveloped with moss, and who foresaw that poor captives had neither funds nor materials in evil days, and after a long period of misfortune, to build a structure that would at all vie with the splendour and extent of Solomon's architecture and decorations, instead of rejoicing, wept aloud; so that, as we learn in the book of Ezra, the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy, from the noise of the weeping uttered by the ancient priests and Levites, and chiefs of the fathers of Israel. To cheer on the emancipated captives to the work, in this state of mingled exultation and despondence, God sent the word of a glorious prophecy. "Who is left among you," exclaimed the venerable Haggai, "that saw this house in her first glory? how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedeck, the high-priest; and be strong all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work; for I am with you." "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former," and I will fill this house with glory, "and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts."

Now what were the CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH FULFILLED THIS PREDICTION. Let this be our second point of consideration.

Disputes have arisen among divines, whether, the temple built by Herod the great, about forty years before the birth of Christ, was an entirely new erection; or a restoration of the temple of Zerubbabel, retaining the foundations of that edifice, and even a porch which yet remained of the former temple of Solomon. The

sly antagonists of Christianity, assailing it under the mask of liberal friendship and rational support, have contended for the entire re-construction of the temple of Herod; thinking that they might thereby obtain a sidelong hit at the veracity of prophecy, which, as we shall immediately see, declared that the Messiah should come to that second temple of Zerubbabel. But in this attempt they have entirely failed, it being clearly proved by their opponents that Herod reared his temple on the yet standing foundations of the temple of Zerubbabel, though crumbling in the decay of nearly six hundred years. But were it otherwise we cannot suppose, that so grand a prediction as that announcing a glory of the latter house which should be greater than the glory of the former, had no further reference than merely to the superior architecture of Herod's temple, though it had pinnacles glittering like stars, and massive marble stones, and a vine of gold and jewels, and a sculptured porch, described by Josephus, as when touched by the sun, resembling a hill of snow. Its superior glory, notwithstanding these splendours, must have rested on something spiritual.

Now, in certain spiritual respects, the mere splendour of the second temple was, so far from being greater, very much inferior to that of the temple of Solomon. We have it upon the authority of Jewish tradition, that the second temple when finished was deficient in five particulars, which had all conspicuously added to the grandeur of the first. One of these was the original ark of the covenant and the mercy-seat, with the two tables of the law, and the pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and which had all been conveyed into Solomon's temple from the primitive tabernacle of the wilderness, and were the most sacred of Jewish antiquities. These were lost in Babylon, and never restored. It is usually supposed, indeed, that an ark or chest was made for the temple of Zerubbabel after the fashion of the first ark of the covenant, and that Ezra's corrected copy of the Pentateuch was therein deposited: a circumstance rendered probable by what

we see in modern synagogues which have all a little coffer, wherein some valuable manuscript of the law is laid up. But whether the cherubim, whose wings formed the mercy-seat, were absent from the second temple or not, that which brooded therein—the Schechinah, the emblem and envelopment of the present Jehovah, was certainly nowhere to be found. Again, the urim and the thummim, the twelve gems on the high-priest's breastplate, which in some way gave out oracular responses, was either no longer in the second temple, or no longer possessed its oracular virtues.

A fourth particular in which the second temple yielded in glory to the first, was that of the fire on the altar, which had come down from heaven to consume the first sacrifices both of Moses and Solomon, and was preserved without being ever extinguished even down to the period of the burning of the temple of Nebuchadnezzar.

And the last point of inferiority consisted in the spirit of prophecy, which, though it remained in the three prophets, Haggai, Zachariah, and Malachi, while the second temple was building, yet for ever afterwards ceased during five hundred years, until Anna, Zacharias, and John the Baptist, announced, like morning stars melting into a dawn, the actual arrival of the Sun of righteousness.

What circumstances, then, we return to ask, verified the prophecy of Haggai—that the glory of the latter house should be greater than that of the former, seeing that it was comparatively so mean a building, and inferior in these five important respects. Let Haggai himself reply—“For thus saith the Lord of hosts; yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations”—He who should be desired and expected by all nations, both Jews and Gentiles—“shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.” Let Zachariah reply—“The man whose name is the Branch (the branch out of the root of Jesse) shall bear the glory; and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and the

Messiah, the King of Zion, meek and bringing salvation, cometh, riding upon a colt, the foal of an ass; and there shall be a fountain opened in Jerusalem for sins, and for uncleanness—and the shepherd shall be smitten, and the sheep shall be scattered; and they shall look on him whom they pierced; and he shall be sold for thirty pieces of silver, and given to the potter.” Let Malachi reply, “Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.” In fact, four years after the superstructure of Herod was fully built upon the foundations of the temple of Zerubbabel, the infant Jesus was introduced into that temple; and again, in his twelfth year, when he reasoned with the doctors; and afterwards twice, when he expelled the buyers and sellers from his Father's house as desecrating that house of prayer.

It is clear, then, that the presence of Christ is the grand circumstance which verified the prediction of Haggai—that the glory of the latter house should be greater than the glory of the former.

Another point in which the glory of the latter house was greater than the glory of the former was the court of the Gentiles. The temple of Solomon had only two courts—that of the priests and that of the Israelites. The Gentiles were considered as profane, and unless converted, as wholly adopting the Jewish religion, disregarded and despised. It is not precisely known at what time after the captivity the court of the Gentiles was enclosed: but, when built, probably after the translation of the Septuagint, two hundred and ninety years before Christ (which with the dispersion of the Jews spread abroad an acquaintance with the sublimities of the true religion) this outer court admitted all men to a certain consideration among the chosen people. The publican, the Ethiopian eunuch, Cornelius, and others, were what is called proselytes of the gate; admitted within the golden gate of Susa, and worshipping

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the one God in the court of the Gentiles at Jerusalem. This was a step towards the further admission of the nations into the entire covenant of peace, through the blood of him who entered within the great or inner veil, threw down the chel, the middle wall of partition between the first and second courts, beyond which it had formerly been death for the Gentiles to pass, and brought them near which were before time afar off, and made both one. This was also foretold by the prophets, both before and after the captivity, and recognised by the aged Simeon. "I will give thee," saith Isaiah, "for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth." "And from the rising of the sun," said Malachi, "to the going down of the same", "my"—that is, Christ's name "shall be great among the Gentiles." And Christ came, as a light to lighten the Gentiles, not less than as a *glory* unto the people of Israel.

Now as this admission of the Gentiles into the privileges of the new covenant, tended to liberalize the minds of the Jews, so on a more contracted scale, ought it not less to teach the different persuasions of Christians to regard each other with due toleration and indulgence; and making a prudent reservation of their own views and principles, to unite in sentiments and deeds of charity.

Thus we see that it was altogether in a spiritual sense, that the glory of the latter house was greater than the glory of the former.

Jerusalem, the sacred city, is once more ruined, the temple has been again buried. It was rased to the ground, and even salt was sown where the plough had been dragged over the site of its foundations. One stone has not been left upon another—even as our Saviour predicted. The arch of Titus at Rome bears memorials of its plundered treasures—its seven-branched and golden candelabrum, its sacred ark, its silver trumpets, which were all deposited in the heathen temple of peace, and ultimately lost in the destruction of the western empire.

Yet there are still two senses in which

we may, with strict propriety, apply the moral of this whole dissertation to our own minds. We have now, after a considerable interruption, returned by the blessing of God, to offer our united prayers and praises in a temple, never aspiring, but always decent; not ostentatiously splendid, but not grudgingly mean; and at this time restored from its decay, and beautified in the glory of its simplicity. We are not assembled, however, to admire it, or to boast of it outwardly; but we are to remember that protestantism, though duly regardful of decent externals and modest decorations—though mindful that man is a being whose senses are the windows of his soul, has lopped off the gaudy trappings of popish superstition. We are to remember that Christianity is not like Judaism, a religion of pomp and ceremony, and multiplied festivals; not like paganism, a religion wherein the fine arts, and the powers of genius, the chisel of the sculptor, the ode of the poet, the combinations of instrumental music, the trillings of various voices, the stately procession, the scattered flowers, the blaze of many lights, or the costly frankincense of Arabia, are directed to excite the fancy and the passions to a pitch, which lulls the conscience, and draws away attention from the conduct; but a religion of chaste design, and like the yet uncorrupted mother of mankind—

"When unadorn'd, adorn'd the most."

A religion of the mind and of the heart—a religion of convinced reason, and confiding faith and sober feelings—a religion of simplicity and sincerity—a religion which teaches that God is a Spirit, and that they who worship Him are to worship Him in spirit and in truth. In this view, then, the grand point to be acknowledged by us is this: that however humble the edifice—here God dwelleth, that the light of his countenance is especially in this place. The grand duty to be attended to, and object to be devoutly wished is, that in this temple God may, week after week, be more fervently and frequently worshipped, that Christ may be more and more in our thoughts, that

we may draw near to the Father in his house and to the Son at his altar; and thus by a new nativity or presentation of Jesus, in this our comely building, more than by any outward adornment, may the glory of this second house be greater than that of the former.

This leads me to consider the second and chief, and last sense in which the subject may be applied figuratively to ourselves. It was not a thing unnatural among the Jews, to consider their persons, the bodily frame illumined by the soul, under the figure of a temple, as being, both of them, the residence of Jehovah.

Yet their gross understandings, taking every expression literally, accused our Lord as a blasphemer against their holy place, when, predicting his own death and resurrection, he said unto them—"Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days. Howbeit he spake of the temple of his body." This figurative idea is more fully developed by St. Paul, and applied to the disciples of Christ—"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." And, again, "What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." And, once more, "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." This temple of the human heart, as it stood originally in Eden, was built, not only after the plan dictated by the will of God, but by God himself, after the conception of his own wisdom, after the model of his own image. Fair was it in its proportions, and goodly in its structure. Every column (every principle) was strength; every capital (every disposition) was moral beauty—every ornament (every feeling and every thought being accordant to the will of

God) was symmetry and grace. Its purity was whiter than the Parian marble, and its elements of durability surpassed the cedar wood of Lebanon. In all that edifice there was no imperfection, it was the finishing and climax, and master-work of creation. The mighty Architect himself approved of it, and saw and declared that it was good. He then ceased from his labour of six days. He hallowed a Sabbath, that that temple of his own, the human soul, might be consecrated. He entered into it, and dwelt there, and filled it with his presence and his influence; and even daily descending from on high, he favoured it with his communications and his oracles.

"Blessed!—thrice blessed days,  
But, ah! how short,—  
Bless'd as the pleasing dreams of holy men,  
But fugitive like these, and quickly gone."

The fiend, the author of evil, crept into this holy temple, and undermined its strength, and tainted its beauty, and spoiled its ornaments, and made it a prey to its banded enemies. A smiling allurement, and a glowing persuasion, the foe without and the foe within, completed the downfall of this beautiful building. Its columns became frail, the worm consumed its cedar beams, the mouldering walls admitted rain at every fissure; it was condemned to destruction, and sin—sin was the conquering Nebuchadnezzar who left it in desolation and decay. But an edict went forth for a restoration of the edifice. The rubbish was cleared away, the walls arose, the beams were braced, the pillars were strengthened, a cement was applied to the chinks, which might in some measure keep out the assailing elements; and such adorning was afforded, as though inferior to what had been, yet left some traces of pristine beauty, and resemblances of original excellence.

Here too, however, under all these disadvantages, a visitant makes his appearance, who renders it true, as of the second temple at Jerusalem, that "the glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former." "Lift up your heads, O ye gates," ye valves of the human heart,

"and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord, the Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory." The same divine presence, that veiled in a golden cloud, filled of old the temple of Solomon—the same which in the likeness of flesh entered the temple of Zerubbabel and of Herod. He, who now in his influences, by his Spirit, is with his disciples always, even unto the end of the world.

Receive these influences, brethren, in the temple of your souls. Behold he, the Messiah, stands at the door of his living temple, the heart of man, and knocks. He might force his way, but he does not; he treats you as willing beings—he knocks. Open unto him, and though in even the humblest mansions, in the breast of the poorest disciple, with reference to outward splendours, he will condescend to come in unto you; and the church, the spiritual temple of the living God, and each integral part of that church, as a wing, a chamber, one of the many mansions of that temple, will be like the spouse of the King of glory, all glorious within. Prepare to sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, let the Spirit of God dwell in you, and this self-dedication, this spiritual worship, will be a far better consecration, than wealth, and pride, and pagan magnificence, could furnish forth with the cattle on a thousand hills, yea, with rivers of wine and oil.

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#### INTERCOURSE WITH THE PEOPLE.

METHINKS I would willingly exchange all the other knowledge I have, for one glimpse more of God and the life to come. Now, by frequent serious conversation about everlasting things, by diligently instructing and catechising your people, you will gain more of this kind of knowledge, than can be gained by other means; and thus you will really grow wiser than those who spend their time in any other way. As theology is a practical science,

the knowledge of it thrives best in a practical course. Laying out here is a means of gathering in; an hearty endeavour to do good, and to communicate, is one of the greatest helps to our proficiency. So that by this means you are likely to become more able pastors of the church, than private studies alone can make you. Particularly it will be an excellent means to help you in preaching; for when you are well acquainted with your people's cases, you will know what to preach upon. An hour's conversation will furnish you with as much matter as an hour's study. As he will be the best physician and lawyer, so he will be the best divine, who adds practice and experience proportionable to his studies; whereas that man will prove an useless drone, who refuses God's service all his life, under a pretence of preparing for it; and let men's souls pass on to perdition, while he pretends to be studying how to recover them, or getting more ability to help and save them.—*Baxter.*

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#### PERSONAL PIETY.

LET not my sermons be the children of my brain, but the travail of my soul, *that I may serve my God with my spirit in the gospel of his Son*; and as a true vessel of the sanctuary, have within me a savour of that water of life which I pour out to others. It is a doleful thing to fall into hell from under the pulpit. But, oh! how dreadful is it to drop thither out of it! Doth not my heart tremble to think, that it is possible for me, like the unbelieving spies, to coast the heavenly Canaan, to commend it to others, and yet never to possess it myself! that whilst I preach to others, *I myself may be a cast-away!* Lord, let me exalt thee in my heart, as my chiefest good; in my life, as mine utmost end; and preach so effectually to my own soul, and to others, *that I may both save myself, and them that hear me.*—*Swinnoek.*

## SERMON XXXIX.

### THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY.

BY THE REV. JOSEPH E. BEAUMONT.

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*"Seek those things that are above."*—Col. iii. 1.

WHILE irrational creatures, by the constitution of their nature, are concerned only for the present moment, it is incumbent on man to consider his relationship to a future world, and to prepare for and anticipate its enjoyments, as being those only which are adapted to his wide-ranging capacity and interminable existence.

The reality of a future and superior state has been clearly revealed to us—not to supply matter and occasion of curious and idle speculation—but to influence our conduct and affections, our life and conversation; to throw a sacred and immortal radiance over this present scene of our being, through which men too generally pass without thought, and from which they retire without hope.

It is recorded of Socrates, that he brought men down from heaven to earth; that is, he drew the attention of men from the study and contemplation of the heavenly bodies, to the consideration of the nature and end of man, the duties and relations of men in this life. Socrates, therefore, was said to have brought down philosophy from heaven to earth. But of Jesus Christ it may be said, that he brings us from earth to heaven; he teaches us a divine philosophy; raises man from things seen, and temporal, and earthly, to things spiritual, heavenly, and eternal. He hath entered the heavenly places, and we are invited and entreated to follow. There is no subject to which the Scriptures more frequently solicit our attention than this. They constantly stamp this

life with importance, by calling us to consider its relationship to that state of rest and blessedness in heaven, which is the ultimate design of the Almighty concerning his rational offspring; a state in which the human mind will be carried to the highest pitch of improvement, and in which all the might of the human faculties, thus improved, will find appropriate and delightful exercise. How fitted is the revelation of such a state to awaken the attention and enkindle the desire of every living thing that is heir to immortality! And how effectually were the first Christians encouraged by it, to endure all that trial of cruel mocking and scourging, bonds and imprisonment, tortures and death, to which they were called for righteousness' sake! And what will so detach our hearts from the low and sordid vanities of earth; what will so guard us from its intoxicating and polluting pleasures; what will so sustain and exhilarate us, amidst its keen and varied sorrows; and, in short, what will so enable us to possess our souls in patience under all that we have to do, and all that we have to suffer, in this the house of our pilgrimage, as the continual thought, the bright prospect, the well-assured hope of the glories that are at God's right hand? Hence the inspired writers are constantly directing our thoughts to heaven; instructing and exhorting us to elevate our affections to the things that are above. Listen to the entreaty of the apostle in the words of the text: "Seek,"—with impressive



and affectionate solemnity and earnestness he calls upon us to "seek those things that are above." Our remarks shall turn on,

I. The things themselves to which reference is here made;

II. The conduct enjoined in relation to them; and,

III. The motives which should impel us to this conduct.

I. THE SUBLIME OBJECT TO WHICH THE EXHORTATION OF THE APOSTLE RELATES. By "the things above" we understand the future blessedness, perfection, and glory of believers in heaven. In this explanation, we are supported by the latter part of the verse and of the sentence in which the words of the text lie. "Seek those things that are above," "where," adds the apostle, "Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." Now, at the *right hand of God*, as the sixteenth Psalm teaches, are transcendent joys and eternal pleasures. "At thy right hand," exclaims the devout prophet, "there is *fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore*." These, then, are the things above, even those which are at God's right hand, the mighty joys, the august exercises, the transporting pleasures, of an eternal heaven.

Men's views differ concerning future, as they differ on the nature of present happiness, and on the way and means of attaining that which is future. Some think of it merely as a continuation of being, from which is excluded all pain, and want, and sorrow; a mere negative heaven. Some regard it as consisting in the active and uninterrupted exercise of their present senses and faculties; the full and free indulgence of their present tastes and affinities, inclinations and desires, habits and pursuits; a Mohammedan heaven. Others, stretching somewhat further, place it in an extension of all their pleasurable faculties, perceptions, and sensibilities, with a vast augmentation of new means of gratification and enjoyment. All our real knowledge of it is gathered from Scripture; and whatever is not drawn from revelation, or is at variance with its testimony on this subject, is not to be regarded.

Man, by searching, cannot find out: God or heaven; by his own penetration and unaided sagacity, he can neither find out what God is, nor where he dwells; neither his true nature, nor the palace in which he unveils his beauty and glory. Life and immortality are brought to light, but only by Christ Jesus in the gospel. From this source alone we derive all our just and appropriate, all our pure and influential conceptions, on this momentous and lofty theme.

Owing to the thick veil that sin and mortality have spread over our mind, we know, even with the revelation that God has graciously favoured us, little in comparison of what is to be known. Such is the darkening, and debasing, and debilitating influence of the clouds and fogs of earth, and sense, and sin which now envelope us, that of heaven, its duties and exercises, its felicities and glories, "we know but in part." Besides, so much has not been revealed as to gratify the entire of our curiosity, or satisfy the whole of our anxious wishes and desires in relation to the future and celestial state of man. The fact itself of the heavenly blessedness of saints is abundantly clear; but wherein consists the blessedness, of how many parts it is composed, what various ingredients enter into it, what is its length, and breadth, and height; what mind can fully conceive, what tongue adequately declare? Yet sufficient is made known to answer the merciful purposes of our Father in heaven, and to meet the pressing and affecting necessities of his human offspring, whilst journeying on through the shadows and wildernesses of earth and time: and heaven and eternity themselves must disclose the rest. Yes, happily for us, *enough* may be seen through the interposing cloud to awaken regard, to stimulate attention, to kindle desire, to rouse our criminal and destructive apathy; enough to throw the stillness of a solemn awe over our minds in the midst of the gayest and busiest scenes of this world, and to start, and quicken, and sustain us in a career of new, and upward, and holy conduct. The eye of faith beholds the land afar off, sees the King in his beauty, and gazes

on the glories of the new Jerusalem. How gracious and condescending are many of the aspects in which the Scriptures exhibit the heaven of the believer. It is held forth to our view as a *banquet*, where our souls shall be satisfied for evermore: the beauties of Jehovah's face, the mysteries of divine grace, the riches of redeeming love, communion with God and the Lamb, fellowship with the infinite Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, being the heavenly fulness on which we shall feed. As a *paradise*; a garden of fruits and flowers, on which our spiritual natures and gracious tastes will be regaled, through one ever-verdant spring and golden summer; a paradise where lurks no serpent to destroy, and where fruits and flowers shall never fade and droop, nor drop and die. As an *inheritance*; but then an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, the inheritance of the saints in light. As a *kingdom*; whose immunities, felicities, and glories are splendid and vast, permanent and real, quite overwhelming indeed to our present feeble imaginings. As a *country*; over whose wide regions we shall traverse in all the might of our untried faculties, and in all the glow of new and heaven-born energies, discovering and gathering fresh harvests of intelligence, satisfaction, and delight. As a *city*; whose walls are burnished gold, whose pavement is jasper, sardonyx, and onyx; through which flows the river of life; the inhabitants of which hunger no more, thirst no more, sicken no more, weep no more, die no more: a city, where there is no need of the sun by day, in which there is no night at all, and of which the Lord God Almighty is the light, and the Lamb the glory. As a *palace*; where dwells the Lord our righteousness, the King in his beauty displayed—his beauty of holiest love; in the eternal sunshine of whose countenance bask and exult the host that worship at his feet. As a *building*; that has God for its maker, immortality for its walls, and eternity for its day. As a *sanctuary*; where the thrice-holy divinity, enshrined in our own nature in the person of Immanuel, is worshipped and adored, with-

out a sigh, without an imperfection, and without intermission; where hymns of praise, hallelujahs of salvation, and hosannahs of redemption, uttered by blest voices without number, ever sound before the throne. As a *temple*; bright with the divine glory, filled with the divine presence, streaming with divine beauty, and peopled with shining monuments of divine goodness, mercy, and grace.

In further contemplating the celestial blessedness of believers, let us very briefly notice,

1. *The perfection of character they shall exhibit in heaven.*—We shall then, indeed, partake of God's nature; be holy as he is holy, awake up with his likeness, and so be fully satisfied. It is impossible for sin or sinners to enter there. All that is above is holy, all that are above are holy. The throne is holy; the temple is holy; the services are holy; the songs are holy; the inhabitants are holy. There is no imperfection above. In one sense Christians are perfect now, and here they are perfect in kind; but which of all them is there that does not lament his shortcomings, his errors, that does not feel himself surrounded with manifold infirmities. God's salvation now experienced is a salvation from sin, so that it has not dominion over us. We now have fellowship with the Father and the Son, and therefore walk in the light; and, if faithful to the grace, and light, and means, that are imparted, sin not. But still there are many frailties in us, many things in our character, which are positive imperfections; there is much that God has to pity; but in heaven there shall be nothing which God will have to pity; on the contrary, he will admire us—feel perfect complacency and satisfaction in us. We shall be free from wrinkles and spots; have no fadings, or faintings, or blemishes, but shall be without any such thing. In heaven are the spirits of just men *made perfect*. On earth how oft we have to lament the wanderings of our mind, the irregular emotions of our physical frame, the faintness of our desires, the coldness of our love. Oh! the thought, that I shall "attain,"—that I shall "be perfect,"—that there will be nothing in me unwor-

thy to my God, or unlike my Redeemer, or unsuited to the pavilions of immortal beauty and glory! "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him my new name."

2. *The exercises in which they shall be engaged.*—Ease, it is commonly thought, is necessary to repose—to complete and uninterrupted repose; and heaven itself is imagined by many to be a scene of inactivity, a region of utter quiescence. But analogy and revelation are against this sentiment. Ease is not real happiness, it is not even an ingredient in happiness. This kind of heaven—one thus characterized and composed—would be death rather than life; it would be exemption from pain rather than positive bliss. Angels, those natives of heaven, those ministers of God's presence, not only know but *do* his pleasure. And are we not taught to pray that our divine Father's will may be done on earth, even as angels *do* it in heaven? The Scriptures have every where spoken of the *employments*, as well as of the happiness of heaven, in the most exalted terms. Let us not forget that to act in the service of God, and to communicate good to others, constitutes, according to the Scriptures, one vast and glorious division of celestial blessedness. Both of what we are to be, and what we are to do, many things are said of a highly interesting nature; and from these, when we compare them with diligence and attention, a great multitude of other things, deeply interesting, may be derived by irresistible inference. For instance; those who obtain immortal life are said, by our Saviour, to be equal or like to angels. This one declaration opens to us a wide field of inquiry and conclusion; and assures us, that whatever angels are or do, or are exhibited as being or doing in the Scriptures, we also shall substantially be or do. But the things which angels do, together with their attributes and circumstances, are, as exhibited to us in the Scriptures, very numerous and very great; and these irresistibly infer others which are great and numerous also. The number and variety of events which make up our system, hardly

strike our minds at all, and probably never enter the imagination of most men, even among Christians. Yet if we read the Scriptures with attention, and believe what we read, we must clearly discern that both the number and the variety are immense. The inhabitants of heaven serve God day and night in his temple. The services of those who in this life fill up their duty, are certainly very numerous; and are so entirely varied, that no two actions among them all are alike. How multiplied then must be the actions involved in a service which night never interrupts; of a mind and a body which are never wearied, and of an existence which knows no end! That they are endlessly varied is unanswerably evident from the consideration, that no two beings in the creation, and no two events in the providence of God have been found exactly alike. Variety is a standing law of created existence and providential dispensation, and throughout eternity will be the great means of disclosing to the intelligent universe the glorious thoughts and purposes treasured up from everlasting in the omniscient mind. Instead, therefore, of being a tame, dull, monotonous, spiritless existence, immortal life is a state of intense energy, vast design, and vigorous action, in which to know and to love, to do and to enjoy, will form a combination of dignity, glory, and happiness, transcending every earthly conception. All this, also, will expand, and rise, and improve for ever.

This view may tend to moderate the surprise and the sorrow, that seize and possess the common mind at the early deaths of eminent Christians, and zealous, and laborious, and gifted, and successful young ministers. They are snatched away from the most active and important services, and we are apt to think that they are gone into darkness and silence, and have sunk into torpor and inactivity: but could we trace their flight, and discern the lofty, and energetic, and valuable exercises in which their freed spirits are now occupied in some of the bright fields of eternity, the wide regions of their Maker's universe, and their Redeemer's heaven, our wonder at their departure

hence (even when at their best estate, or in the very efflorescence of all their youthful ardour) would moderate; and our grief, free from the bitterness of dissatisfaction, would flow on in a current less deep and powerful. O they are not lost, though their sun has gone down while it is yet day. They have but set, to our apprehension, indeed, prematurely, beneath our horizon, to rise again bright planets in the hemisphere of celestial glory.

3. *The happiness of which they shall participate.*—All the religious experiences of earth affords but a faint emblem of the bliss of heaven. The delight that Christians now experience kindles into rapture at thought of the richer delight that awaits them above. Among the children of God in heaven (all happy) the degree of happiness may vary; for it depends upon the capacity of enjoyment possessed by each, and this again upon improvement of character, and of talent, and of trust, and therefore they who have prepared most for heaven, will be most happy in heaven. Saints in heaven are perfectly happy, because perfectly holy. Here they taste of the streams that flow from the infinite fullness of their Father and their God; there they will have come to the fountain itself. Here they receive, now and then, a bunch of grapes from the better Canaan; there they will have full and free access to the tree of life that is in the paradise of God. Here they obtain an occasional glimpse through the entanglement of the wilderness, and through the mists and fogs that hang over Jordan, and see the green fields, and the golden harvests, that wave luxuriant and vast on the other side; there they will *possess* the vineyards and well-springs of a perpetual Canaan. Here they are sometimes revived by sweet odours, wafted over from the mountains of spices that lie on the other side the lions' dens and leopards, haunts, among which they at present pass; there, every peril is past, and having entered through the gates into the city, all is peace, triumph, and perfection. Here they have many a troubled, many a stormy, and many a cloudy day; there they shall have everlasting joy and glad-

ness on their heads; and sorrow and sighing, and clouds and shadows, and storms and tempests, having for ever fled away, they shall abide under a cloudless sky, in regions of eternal bliss. In this land of their captivity they may hang their harps upon the willows, and, yielding to the sorrows which fill their hearts, forget to sing the Lord's song; but in that land of accomplished promise and finished hope, their harps shall be ever in their hands, and the high praises of God in their mouths, to fill with their transports of gratitude and joy the palace of their king and their God. If every step here is through a vale of tears, there it is through a land of pure delight. In the house of their Father above, they shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more; neither shall the sun light upon them, nor any heat. And if any recollection of former sufferings remain, it will serve only to enhance their enjoyments, and augment their wonder, as they view the intricate mazes through which divine wisdom conducted them. Our happiness will be made complete by beholding the brightness of the Father's glory, in the vision of which we shall rejoice with joy unspeakable; by the presence of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! Yes, *there* we shall see Jesus—shall behold the God-man, our Friend, our Priest, our Sacrifice, our All. Then we shall love in return for all his infinite love; and bless and worship him with a growing adoration, and dilating gratitude, for ever and ever. It will, indeed, be heaven to see our Jesus' face! O the infinitude of our bliss! when we shall see Him as He is, and love with a passion like his! O that exquisiteness of joy!—those gusts of pure perennial bliss, which the saints of God will experience, in singing praises and songs of deliverance to God and the Lamb for ever! O what rapture to be engaged in penetrating the mysteries of Providence; in listening to the music of the spheres, and the jubilee of the universe! in gazing with untold ecstasy on the face of God and the Lamb, and deriving from him, who is the sea of light and love, fullness of joy, and pleasures for evermore! "But eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it

entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath laid up for them that love him."

4. *The friendships we shall share there.*—Man is constituted to be happy in society. Place him in solitude, and however exciting and felicitous are his circumstances in other respects, he will wither and pine away. But above, we shall be with the many that shall come from the east, and west, and north, and south, and shall sit down with Abraham; Isaac, and Jacob. The entire heaven of angels, and the whole host of the redeemed, we shall have sweet and improving fellowship with for ever! The wise and the good, the great and the pure, the benevolent and active from every region, will be our companions and associates, with whom we shall live, and love, and know, and obey, through one eternally enduring day. Of all the afflictions to which we are liable, there is none so painful as the death of our friends. And, oh! what a consoling balm is the doctrine that we shall, in the realms above, be restored to their fellowship. This doctrine is involved in many passages of Scripture: in the account of the last judgment—in the language of David on occasion of the death of his infant child by Bathsheba—in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus—in the consolation which our Saviour gives to the penitent sinner on the cross—in the assurance administered by the apostle St. Paul to the Thessalonian believers, that they should be his joy and crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming—and in the same apostle forbidding them to sorrow for such as had fallen asleep as though they had no hope of being united with them, and of being together with the Lord—and in the general use which the sacred writers make of the word *sleep* for death—a simile which would be flagrantly incorrect if our recollections, our friendships and affections, were not renewed in a future state. And, in general, the same doctrine is taught also through the whole book of the Revelation of St. John. Happy prospect, that exalts friendship into religion! What blest society there will be above!

II. *THE CONDUCT ENJOINED IN RELATION TO THESE THINGS.* We are told by the apostle that we should *seek them*.

1. This implies or supposes *belief of them*.—Let us attend for a moment to the evidence that proves the actual existence of a future state. Those who have just conceptions of the perfections of God, will admit the possibility of it. He who gives us existence on this side the grave, can give it on the other side. He who has bestowed life in time, can impart it through all coming eternity.

Numerous considerations indicate a high degree of probability concerning a future state. Every man has a power of thinking and willing, of desiring and abhorring; feels that he possesses within himself a *soul*, (deathless life,) an active, conscious, immaterial principle or nature. And though this has its present residence in the body, it is perfectly distinct and essentially different from the clay tabernacle in which it is enshrined, and which is essential to its manifestation in the present life, and therefore its existence will not be involved or implicated in the fall of its tabernacle, any more than a sun beam is crushed by the fall of an old house through which it is passing. The strong desire of immortality, too, is an argument for it. Why should God universally implant a desire he never meant to gratify? This desire shows design. The present mode of divine government indicates the same. The justice and wisdom of the Governor are covered with dark and impenetrable clouds, if the history of man is merely confined to the present world, and closes altogether with time; for vile men here are often exalted, and holy men are depressed. One event often befalls opposite characters. The common consent of mankind is in favour of it. Some kind of belief in a future state, and in some sort of future happiness, is very general. Even in the natural uninformed mind, there are strong anticipations of futurity. And the idea of the savage, that after death he goes to some green and blooming island across the deep, to dwell with the Great Spirit, appears to us to be the remains of the intuitive impression originally stamped on

the human mind, as an evidence of its immortality. But why do I say that a future state of bliss is *possible*? Why do I dwell on its *probability*? We are not led to this conclusion as a mere matter of reasoning; as an affair of analogy; as a thing to be inferred: I take up my Bible and say,—there is positive certainty of it,—a certainty, drawn, not from the fair operations of reason, but from the sure, and strong, and steady lights of revelation. The testimony of God in his word clears away every doubt concerning it, and opens to us the realities of that eternal kingdom in which he reigns. The Scriptures amply unfold the doctrine of immortality, and show us the throne and judgment-seat of the Eternal; they disclose to us, with awakening and irresistible emphasis and clearness, the mansions of the blessed, and their dread alternative, the prison of the wicked. See this revelation in the Old Testament. Enoch was translated, that he should not see death, and was not found, for God took him. The Hebrew patriarchs desired a better country. The patriarch of Uz knew that in his flesh he should see God. Moses had respect to the recompense of the reward. David believed he should see God's face in righteousness, awake up in his likeness, and be satisfied. Daniel declares that they that sleep in the dust shall awake and come forth. Isaiah announces the jubilee of the dead—the morning of their manumission: “Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust.” And another Old Testament oracle triumphantly proclaims that “Death is swallowed up in victory.” But the *New Testament* abounds in this class of evidence. There, life and immortality are brought to meridian light, and stand confessed most vividly before us. There, indeed, from beginning to end, God hath promised eternal life. Matt. v. 8. Luke xii. 32. Matt. xxv. There are things above, then: to seek them, suppose that you have a belief of them; that you doubt not their existence, their reality, their certainty.

2. It implies *that attention should be much directed towards them*. They must be *mind*ed, as well as believed. The fact of

the vast importance of these things might lead to the conclusion, that the duty here enjoined is not likely to be forgotten or neglected. We might imagine that all that was necessary on this subject, is just to convince of the importance of these things, and then leave the mind to its own natural sense of what is due to its interests, in order to secure the proper line of conduct towards the things thus exhibited. But how different all this is from what we know to be the fact. When we call to recollection the earthly bias which men have taken, and the downward tendency by which they are, since the fall, characterized, it is proper to remind them of the necessity of the course which the apostle calls “looking at the things which are not seen and eternal; seeking the things that are above.” You may be exposed to the secularities of life, and unless you indulge and cultivate the upward tendency so emphatically expressed in the text, they will fix you down to the low level of earthly and every-day existence. You must attend to the leading course of thought and inclination, by which your mind is characterized. The thoughts must be turned in this lofty direction:—I say *thoughts*, for it must not be a thought about heaven now and then merely, with long and frightful intervals between, but toward the things above the attention must be *much* directed. We must feel that religion is the one main and essential article in the great business of life, for although there is a time for every thing, you are not to exclude religion from its pre-eminence; you are not to confine it, as a sacred and hidden mystery, but to be seen and meditated at certain occasional periods, but rather to diffuse it as a colouring through all the substance of life. Thus the patriarchs sought the things above,—of whose piety it is the highest eulogy to say, that “they declared plainly that they *sought* a better country,”—so fixed was their attention to sacred and heavenly things. Then let us thus seek them; by a constant and instantaneous religion seek the things that are above. To seek them must signify also that we are to,

3. *Set our attachment upon them.* *Set*

*your affections on things above*, it is added in the verse after the text. The import of this exhortation is, that we are to admire and love them, as well as believe and contemplate them. It may be objected to this view, that the regard which we are now directing to be paid to things future, is inconsistent with the attention which is due to the interests of the present life. It is, however, certain, that Christianity enjoins no opposing duties, prescribes no incompatible precepts. Whilst we are commanded to render to God the things that are God's, we are at the same time charged to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. Whilst we are directed to be fervent in spirit serving the Lord, we are instructed also to be diligent in business. Can it be thought that he who is passing through a wilderness, in a state of banishment from the scenes and fellowships which he holds most dear, should not often think with emotion of the delights, and securities, and sweet societies of a permanent and congenial home?

The history of the Jews, when in Babylon, is an illustration of the conduct enjoined in the text. Did they, whilst living in Babylon, surrounded with its absorbing bustle, and engaged in its active business, forget the land of Israel, and disregard it in their hearts? No; their recollection of it was most vivid and affectionate, deep and practical, ardent and constant; and is described in language beautiful, fervid, and impressive. Hear their affecting complaint, Ps.cxxxvii. "*By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down; yea, we wept when we remembered Zion; we hanged our harps upon the willows.*" One of these captives is represented as expressing himself in the following words; "*If I forget thee, oh Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not speak well of thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem to my chief joy!*" Their hearts, then, were in Jerusalem, though they sojourned in Babylon. The dust and stones of Jerusalem, and the rubbish of its temple and its towers, was dearer to them than all the magnificence and splendour of the greatest capi-

tal of the then greatest empire in the world.

So should we feel and act in reference to the Jerusalem that is above; the new, the heavenly Jerusalem. To the true believer this world is a desert, dry and barren; and though there may be here and there a spot which seems to present inviting verdure, and to court his stay, he lingers not, but presses on, for he feels it is not his rest, because it is polluted; and he casts a solicitous look beyond its barren sands, to the land of promise, where are his home, his treasure, and his heart. And his greatest burden of grief is, that the current of his affections should ever be interrupted, or that their fervour should be repressed, for a single moment, by the trifles and vanities of the passing scene. Thus having his heart in heaven, his feet are ever moving thither; for when acting and enduring under the impression and expectation of heaven and heavenly things, his step is firm in the road that leads to things above. And when the affections are not only lifted up to, but *set upon* them, neither the length, nor the toil, nor the difficulty of the way can greatly impede the progress thither.

4. *Diligent and persevering exertions*, in order to obtain them; belief of the things that are above awakens attention to them; attention to those things gives rise to desires after the possession of them; and these desires, in their turn, give birth to exertions, in order to secure the attainment and possession of them. He who knows what the workings of affection towards any object are, knows well that his exertions to secure and attain it are just in proportion to the affection and desire with which he regards it.

Now all that we require in religion is, that you act consistently; that you regard the things proposed to you with an attention corresponding to their suitability and importance; and that you exert yourselves to attain them, with an ardour, and an assiduity, and a perseverance, proportionate to their desirableness and value. Seeking the things above, then, must imply the use of those means which are prescribed in Scripture, and the observance of those ordinances which have been instituted by

our Lord and Master, as helps on the way to heaven. And what are the means whereby we are to hold fast, and hold out, and hold on, till we obtain them? I answer, faith and prayer, accompanied by the reading of the word of God, and a devout meditation thereon, together with a diligent and earnest attention to the institutions of grace and the ordinances of religion. These are the means, the conscientious, diligent, and persevering use of which, followed and crowned with the blessing of God, will lead you through the low vale of humble love, to the paradise that is unfading and eternal. Yes, it is by faith only that we can walk in the way of life and peace—the road that leads to heaven and God. The shield of faith is that alone whereby we are able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked one and to overcome the world. Its influence alone can sanctify the character and purify the heart, and give substance and evidence to things not seen and eternal—the things that are above. And it is only by prayer that faith can be kept alive and active, and become omnipotent, as it was with Moses; to whom what Aaron and Hur were, (holding up his hands when Israel fought against Amalek,) prayer is to faith. And the ordinances of religion stretch the arms of faith and fan the breath of prayer, and feed and inflame our desires and longings after the heavenly worship. It is in them that our characters receive their best impressions—their holiest influence. Faith will lead you to the ground of all your hope, the spring of all your joys; and prayer, in union with faith, will bring Christ down from heaven to be your staff of dependence and your rod of defence; for of yourselves you can do nothing. Faith will lead you to feed on the bread of God—the manna from above; and prayer will draw around you the atmosphere of heaven, out of which you will derive those influences of grace that shall strengthen and comfort you for the rest of the way. You may have to pass through tribulation, yea through much tribulation; but it is the way to the kingdom. The farther you advance on the road, the humbler will you become; and the nearer you come to heaven, the more

lively will be your apprehensions of the necessity of holiness, and the more strenuous and constant your pursuit of it:—“Not counting myself to have apprehended, this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

III. SOME MOTIVES OR CONSIDERATIONS WHICH SHOULD IMPEL US TO THIS CONDUCT, especially those which lie in the neighbourhood of the text. Be persuaded to it,

1. *From a regard to consistency of conduct.*—Consistency is that agreement that every part of a man's conduct should have to the character which he sustains and the profession that he makes. Sometimes it may be difficult to be consistent; but generally, from the very harmony that the part we have to perform has with our character and principles, there is a pleasure and satisfaction in its performance; for it holds true, that what symmetry is to the bodily frame, that consistency is to the moral character of an individual. And, whether from some original fitness in the nature of the things themselves, or from some arbitrary associations that take place in the mind, that which is consistent is not hard to be discovered. Even in the representation of ideal character this is studied and attended to; and whenever the laws of association are violently severed and broken, the effect is painful and disappointing. Fiction pleases, only so far as it corresponds with real character. Without this consistency there could be no uniformity in the human character; all would be unnatural, disjointed, harsh, injurious, unlovely; one great moral chaos; a sea of things mischievous, monstrous, and offensive. Soldiers running away in battle; judges violating those laws which they were sworn to maintain and defend; a man, distinguished by wisdom and prudence, erudition and sagacity, giving himself up to the most ridiculous, and absurd, and degrading follies; a man bowed down with a multitude of years and their accumulated infirmities, embarking in the most extensive, laborious, and speculative enterprises of worldly



business, are all inconsistencies—they are palpable and monstrous incongruities.

And can it be thought less inconsistent in a disciple of Christ and a child of God, to be eagerly grasping after the vanities and fortunes of earth, at the same time that his heart, and his home, and his treasure are professedly in heaven? Thus, in religious character, there is a consistency which is imperative, beautiful, and advantageous. No doubt Christians have many other motives to holy conduct, besides that which arises from the desire and the obligation to maintain the consistency of their character; but they do not overlook the all-compelling argument in favour of such conduct, which grows out of their new state and character. "If," says the apostle, "ye be risen with Christ, seek," &c. "You who were dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath God quickened together with Christ. If then," he argues with irresistible point and force, "if ye be thus changed, and "are risen with Christ, seek," &c. The distinction between their present and their former state is not a distinction without a difference, but a distinction so great as to be set forth in the Scriptures under images and illustrations of the most decisive and striking nature: they are turned from darkness to light—they have passed from death unto life—they have gone forth out of the pit, and emerged from the dungeon—they are created anew, and born again—in short, "they who were dead in sins, are quickened together, and are risen with Christ." From so great a difference of state, it is expected that the greatest difference of conduct should follow. Every view of the Christian's character given us in the Scriptures, shows us the importance and necessity of consistency of conduct. Is he set forth as running a race? then his eye must be upon the prize, and he must press towards the mark of it with all possible diligence and earnestness. Is he held up as a combatant? then he is never to be without his arms, never to sleep upon his post, or to relax in his energies, until all the field is won, and proclaimed won. Is he a citizen? then he is to cher-

ish a sense of the advantages, privileges, and immunities of his high destiny, and to walk worthy of his exalted avocation. Is he a member of one vast and holy family? then he must adhere to the principle that animates and actuates the whole, or he will interrupt and disturb its harmony and perfection. Is he in Christ? then he must abide in him, and so bring forth much fruit, that his God and Father may be glorified. In short, is he a child of God, and an heir of glory; is he risen with Christ? then he must seek the things that are above, where Christ sitteth.

What should we think of him that is heir to a great monarchy, collecting and arraying himself in the rags and tatters of a pauper? and yet such conduct would not be as inconsistent as ours is, if we prefer earth to heaven. We should consider it as an act of meanness, in one possessed of unbounded affluence, to be collecting every straw, and gathering all the refuse that he could find? and yet such conduct would not be as inconsistent as ours, who profess to be risen with Christ, is, if we seek the things below, and not the things that are above. And is there any thing in the riches of earth that can for one moment be compared with the things that are above—the riches of a blissful eternity? Is there any thing in the honours of this life that can for a single instant be put in competition with that glory which is to be revealed in the saints? Is there any thing in the pleasures of time that can be balanced with the joys that are at God's right hand—the pleasures in his presence for evermore? Seeing, then, that you look for such things, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation!

2. *On account of the reasonableness of the duty itself*, I would enforce it upon you.

And let me ask, can there be any thing more reasonable than that, among the multiplicity of things which press upon and court our attention, we should seek those that are most excellent and most enduring? The things that are below—the riches, the pleasures, the honours, the business, the bustle, and whatever else

this short endearing world can give—all earthly things are gross and unsatisfactory, hollow and vain, blighted and milled, and cannot constitute the felicity of man, being neither suited to the spiritual nature nor to the immortal duration of our souls; they can neither satisfy us while we live, nor preserve us from death, nor accompany us into the other world, nor contribute any thing to our happiness there. And if they can do nothing towards our real and appropriate felicity, why should we so eagerly seek them; why set our hearts upon them? They that seek for happiness in earthly things are like the women sitting over our Saviour's sepulchre, with their faces bowed down to the earth; they seek the living among the dead: our happiness is not here, it is risen, it is *above*. Let our hearts ascend thither, where our happiness and our treasure are. If the things among which we grovel for the food and light of our imperishable nature, had a mouth and a tongue, and could speak to us, they would say, "Why look ye so earnestly on us," as though we could satisfy your immortal cravings. Are we in God's stead—in Christ's place—in heaven's room. Look not on us,—we are but things seen and temporal. As well might the chemist look for the philosopher's stone among the dust of the streets, or hope to elaborate the elixir vite from the polluted water of a stagnant lake, as we expect to find among the things below the bliss of our undying spirits. God never put it into them: and nothing can be to us more than God intended it. In our pursuit of the things of this world as our chief good, we are following after vanity, hunting a shadow, pursuing a fallacy. And why should we bestow our thoughts, our desires, our longings and affections, upon these unreal and fallacious, low and mean things, when there are incomparably better objects to fix them upon?

Besides, the unreasonableness of seeking things beneath will appear still more from their shortness and transitoriness. The fashion of this world passeth away, but the things which are above abide and endure for ever and ever. Like the bubble that is blown, and that, when the

rays of light fall on it, glitters in all the colours of the rainbow; but whilst we gaze, bursts, and is no more—like the gourd which casts its cooling shade against the vehement noontide heat, but, ere the next day's sun, has utterly withered away—like the flower, that blooms and sheds its fragrance in the morning, but in the evening its beauty and its odour are gone—like the shadow that flings itself for a moment across our path, and then declineth—like a vapour that appeareth and is quickly dissipated, and we see it no more,—so rapidly the things that are beneath consume and flee away. O "what shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue." No! shadows we are not, "though shadows we pursue." O let us elevate our thoughts from time to eternity, and transfer our affections from earth to heaven. All below perish in the using, but the things that are above are so lofty and pure, so sublime and godly, so real and true, that the very desire of them gives the mind an elevation, and a strength, and a purity, which in themselves are most improving, most grateful, valuable, and important.

But perhaps it may be objected against the reasonableness of the course which we are now enjoining, that to require a person in one situation to be continually directing his anticipations and preparations towards another and a future one, is impracticable and absurd. This objection arises either from ignorance of the nature and influence of religious exercises and pursuits upon man's present and social state, or from wilful perversion of the truth. So far is the duty enjoined from being incompatible with a due regard to the just interests and engagements of the present life, that a proper attention to them is secured by religious principles; for it is by a patient continuance in well-doing that we are to seek for glory, honour, immortality, eternal life; not by visions and reveries, seclusions, and abstractions; not by an idle and voluptuous sentimentalism.

It is true we have seen the disciples of the church of Rome thus unfitting and indisposing themselves for the appropriate and necessary avocations and duties, and

intercourse of social and civil life, under pretence of deeper devotedness and higher sanctity, and of cultivating closer and more uninterrupted communion with things above. But this is the abuse of religion; this is being wise above what is written: it is substituting the traditions of man for the commandments of God.

Here we are educating for futurity, and the use and end of education is to prepare for scenes and situations, for services and engagements that are future and distant. Is it considered unreasonable and improper in a parent to inure his child to the thought of the future—to lead him to anticipate it—to fit and qualify him for acting his part well in it? Surely not. Is it wisdom and kindness in him to discipline and educate his child, and so to prepare him for his coming manhood? The parent knows that his child will not remain a child—that he will outgrow childhood, and stretch into maturity, and he cannot endure the thought that his child is to become a man, and not be *fitted* for manhood. No more is it unreasonable in an expectant of immortality to seek for a preparation for immortality: reason says that the heir of eternity should labour to be made meet for eternity. Dismal thought! to plunge into eternity unfit for it,—without any relish for its joys, or capacity for its duties, or title to its rewards. O then be ready for eternity, for it cometh in such an hour as we think not. O let it not surprise you unawares, let it not overwhelm you in a state of unpreparedness. To make preparation for it is the strongest reason, the highest wisdom, the truest philosophy, the deepest science; this is true religion. Hence we are exhorted by the inspired teachers to lay up treasure in heaven, and forbidden to be cumbered and troubled about many things.

We should be prompted to this on account of,

3. *The present advantages which result from it.*

By a wise appointment of God, duty and interest are joined, and as we attend to the one so the other will be promoted. Godliness is profitable for all things,

having promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. Religion "is our life," even now. All things work together for good to them that love God. To be engaged in setting our affections on things above is that very exercise which is the best calculated to promote our present welfare and immediate comfort. For when the thoughts and affections are set on things above, they are placed on their proper object, they are attached to their appropriate centre, and the result must be rest of spirit, inward tranquillity, satisfaction, and harmony. So that, independent of our prospects in futurity itself, were we merely to consult our true interests in the present state, we must be induced to obey the direction of the apostle from the singularly happy influence which it exerts on the actual condition of the mind.

Whilst our thoughts and affections are set on the things above, worldly prosperity will not greatly elevate, nor worldly adversity much depress; the one will not intoxicate, the other will not destroy. The Christian's great treasure knows no decay. His most valuable possession is not liable to the contingencies to which all earthly things are subject. He is hastening to an incorruptible inheritance, a kingdom that cannot be moved. And

"A hope so much divine  
May trials well endure."

You, who know that you have in heaven a better and enduring substance; that are sure of a place at God's right hand—a mansion in the skies—a bower in paradise—a seat in glory—a repose in Abraham's bosom—an asylum, a refuge, a house, a shelter, in eternity: you, that are going to the general assembly and church of the first-born, to the innumerable company of angels, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to God the Judge of all; to the general rendezvous of the just, the gathering of the called, and faithful, and chosen, you can afford a few trials by the way. You can smile at the transient storm, remembering the haven for which you are bound. Your little bark may feel the dash and

fury of the storm, but her anchor is cast within the haven, and she will outlive the billows, and defy their rage. The believer has cast anchor in heaven, and though he may suffer from the storms of life, he cannot be a wreck. You that are trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, may bend before the blast as it whistles and howls around you, but you shall not be broken by it. Let winds blow and tempests roar, they will take away nothing but leaves; the tree is safe, and can neither be shivered nor torn up, being fast rooted by the throne of God; and the fruit it bears is to life eternal. So we hear the pious of every age expressing and solacing themselves amidst the fluctuation of surrounding circumstances, and the depression to which it gives rise. David exclaims, "though the mountains," &c. Habakkuk—"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Paul—"I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." All believers may say, "We are cast down, yet not destroyed—sorrowful, yet always rejoicing—patient in tribulation, yet rejoicing in hope." The Christian can bear the loss of those things that perish in the using, knowing that he has bags which wax not old, riches that never decay, a treasure in the heavens unfading and eternal.

4. Above all—be entreated to seek the things above, *because they are the scene in which Christ dwells*. This is the argument with which the apostle enforces the injunction. *There is Christ in his rest and glory; and where he is will you not seek to be also?* And is it not the object of his affectionate solicitude that you may be with him in his glory? Hear that prayer from one whom the Father heareth always, and exult in what you hear: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me

where I am; that they may behold my glory." It is the presence of Christ in heaven that will make it so rich a heaven to you, you saved sinner. Have you not enjoyed his presence in some favoured seasons on earth, and have not its manifestations been most sweet and exhilarating? If such are the streams, what must be the fountain? If such the glimpses, what will be the full and unclouded gaze? Times of refreshing even now are from the presence of the Lord; what will be the high felicities of his heavenly presence! If communion with him (through media) be so delightful, that it supplies our souls with heavenly food, and our seasons of its enjoyment are the bright spots of our journey to the upward house, what must it be to sit at his feet in glory, to gaze upon that face of his that shineth like the sun in his strength, and to hold intimate and unbroken fellowship with him whose smile irradiates the whole paradise of God! This is all we desire—to be *with the Lord!* this the summit of our wishes! True, we read of the splendour of the palace of the Almighty King—of the golden streets, the jasper pavement, the angel choirs, the swelling chorus of eternity: but this word, "we shall be ever with the Lord, be where Christ sitteth," conveys to us more of heaven than all the metaphorical emblems of it, august and gorgeous, delicious and delightful as they are! It was this that made John, who leaned on the breast of Jesus as he sat at meat, say, (1 John iii. 2,) "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." To Him all heaven in one thanksgiving joins, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive riches, and power, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." And do we not feel solicitous to go up on high, that we too may swell the music of adoration and gratitude which is rendered him there? Surely it is all our desire to "behold the Lamb" upon the throne, and to join in that immortal song which ascribes

to him that which is so justly his due. Seek the things above, then, for *there Christ sitteth*.

5. Finally, be admonished by the consideration of the dreadful alternative which must inevitably follow the neglect of this duty. If you seek them not, you will be excluded from them for ever. If you are not preparing for heaven, you are for hell. If you follow not holiness, you cannot see the Lord. If you refuse to seek the things above, you are seeking death in the error of your ways. It is only to those who have given diligence to make their calling and election sure, that an entrance can be ministered into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Prepare, then, to meet your God, for if you do not he will meet you as a bear bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of your heart. O then, as you would not lie down in sorrow, nor make your abode in the flames of hell, nor dwell where the howlings and wallings of damnation fill the place with noise more dreadful than ten thousand thunders, nor be fastened upon by a worm that can never be shaken off, nor consumed by a fire that can never be quenched; as you would not be undone and lost for ever, O seek, I entreat, I beseech, I conjure you, by all that is delightful in heaven, and by all that is dreadful in hell; by the authority of God your Maker, and by the love of Christ your Redeemer, and by the strivings of the Holy Ghost; by the necessities of your immortal spirit; by the approach of death, and the solemnity of judgment, and the tremendousness of eternity; by all I pray you to seek the things that are above.

In conclusion. I think I may say that I am set free from the necessity of making a stated application by the tenor of the discourse itself. I trust, however, that you have made inquiry into the matter as we have proceeded, testing your characters as the professed disciples of Christ by the views that have been supplied. Examine well the foundation of your hope; ascertain the reality of

your resemblance to the mind and character of the Lord Jesus Christ; and particularly see how far your profession and conduct agree—how they answer the one to the other. Since the original publication of Christianity many are the objections against it that have been advanced by its enemies. We have reason and evidence enough to satisfy the inquiries of the philosophical, the argumentative, the learned, and the critical; and not one of those objections which are founded on argument, and learning, and philosophy, and criticism, but has been most satisfactorily and triumphantly answered, over and over again. But that which has reference to the subject which has now occupied our attention—the objection which says that Christians are so worldly, so selfish, so avaricious, that there is no difference between them and those that make no profession, and that the former are just as earthly, and as secular, and as feverish as the latter: this objection, I say, is not so easily answered and set aside. Here it is, my brethren, that the Saviour is wounded in the house of his friends. It is difficult to find an answer to this allegation, and I summon you and myself practically to refute it. If we have been thus culpable and injurious, let us be so no more: let us be persuaded, and entreated, and exhorted henceforth to walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds; but to live soberly, righteously, yea godly, in this present world. Let us maintain such a walk and conversation as not only shall bring no reproach upon the worthy name whereby we are called, but such as shall prove beneficial and ornamental, influential and useful: let us remember that the cause of Christ is committed to us in the world; its fate and fortunes are, in some sort, in our hands, and it is for us to uphold and to extend it. And O let us see to it that its brightness is not sullied, nor its progress impeded, through our personal inconsistency and impurity; and to this end let us be constantly “looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

## THE PULPIT GALLERY.

NO. XII.

REV. THOMAS RAFFLES, LL.D.

"Ever was he seen  
A faithful pastor. In admonition warm,  
Oft did he caution the too thoughtless tribes  
Against each sin that easily besets  
The heart; and oft, more anxious than their  
sires,  
Taught the surrounding innocents, who loved  
His friendly smile, the lesson to be good.

POLWHEELE.

DR. RAFFLES was born May 17, 1778, in the parish of Christchurch, Spital-fields, London, where his father was an eminent and highly respected solicitor. The early part of his education he received at Peckham in Surrey, under the Rev. M. Ready, from whence he removed to a situation in the Bishop of London's registry, in Doctors' Commons. While at school he was introduced to the Rev. Dr. Collyer, who, perceiving his great predilection for the ministry, strongly encouraged it, and, in conformity with the doctor's advice, he returned to the academy at Peckham, and entered upon a course of preparatory studies, previous to his admission into the College at Homerton, which took place in 1804. He remained there rather more than four years, and on leaving the college was ordained to the pastoral office over the Congregational church at Hammersmith.

Mr. Raffles continued in this scene of labour for two years, when, in consequence of the melancholy event which deprived Liverpool of the excellent and lamented Spencer, he was invited, with other ministers, to supply for a few weeks the bereaved church. In November, 1811, Mr. R. preached on three Sabbaths in Newington chapel, Liverpool, and shortly after received an unanimous call to become the pastor of the congregation late under Mr. Spencer's charge. This invitation was accepted, and in the April following he took up his residence in Liverpool, which has been the scene of his active labours ever since.

In December, 1820, Mr. Raffles was created Doctor of Laws, by the *Senatus Academicus* of the Marischal College and University of Aberdeen, from whence he had previously received the degree of Master of Arts. His testimonials on being created a doctor were signed by the Dukes of Sussex and Somerset, as graduates of the same degree in the English universities.

Dr. Raffles has been the author of several useful and important works—his *Memoirs of the life and ministry of Spencer* is a beautiful piece of biography—his *Tour through France and Switzerland* is often used by travellers through the romantic scenery of Savoy. The doctor has also published two volumes of *Lectures on the doctrines and duties of the Christian religion*, and sundry discourses delivered on public occasions.

His talents as a preacher are of the first order: the crowds which attend his ministry—the affection which is felt for him by the members of his church, and the universal esteem with which he is regarded by all classes of society, are the best tributes to his talents and his virtues, and the brightest and best rewards he can hope for, or desire, on this side of eternity.

We close this sketch with an extract from a work by the Rev. Calvin Colton, entitled "*Four Years in Great Britain.*" On Mr. Colton's visit to England he landed at Liverpool on a Sunday; in the evening of the day of his debarkation he went to Great George street chapel to attend divine service, and heard the subject of this sketch preach. The following is his account of the man and the occasion:

"At the appointed hour a clergyman ascended the pulpit, knelt, and offered his silent prayer—a custom most befitting and impressive, but not practised in America, except by two denominations; and then, opening the Bible, he read the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew with great pertinency and pathos of expression, in silvery and subduing tones. From the first opening of his lips he seemed moved from his inmost soul. I could have imagined, though ignorant of the cause, that

the deep fountains of feeling were opened within him, and that some mighty sympathies were working there, and I thought too that the congregation were ready to be with him in feeling; but still I knew not the occasion. 'Is that Dr. Raffles?' said I in a whisper to the gentleman on my right, as the preacher began to read. 'Yes, sir,' was the answer. After the usual introductory services, and a prayer which breathed the soul, and seemed communion with the skies, a fellowship with heaven, and fitted well to raise the heart that wished to be with God, the following text was announced:—'Therefore be ye also ready: for in an hour that ye know not the Son of man cometh.'

"'Nearly twenty years have rolled away since I have had the pastoral charge of this congregation,' said the preacher, (and these were his first words after reading the text,) 'and never have I been called to mingle my tears with the bereaved of my charge, in any instance, for a work of death so astounding to private and public sympathy as in the late and ill-fated doom of the Rothsay Castle.' And here, at the end of the first sentence, the secret was all opened to me, and I felt myself at once a mourner with the mourning, and was ready to claim a full part in the deploring enactment of that solemn hour. For I had passed in full view of the scene of death, and had heard the story for the first time that very day. Three members of Dr. Raffles' church, Mr. Lucas, his wife, and their daughter, were of the number who perished: and that evening it had devolved on the pastor to stand up before a sympathizing people to tell the story, and try to impress them with the practical lesson of the awful event; and he did tell the story in the outset—the simple story. He did not begin a great way off, and deliver a lecture on the abstract truth, till his hearers were tired of a *discussion*, as it is too apt to be the fashion on such occasions; but he told the simple story as the exordium of his sermon. He briefly noticed the character of those whose sudden and awful death they lamented; traced the pathway of their spirits through the stormy waves of the

ocean to the haven of eternal rest, and then applied himself to the proper theme of his text, in application to his hearers, and in view of the mournful event which had suggested it—'Be ye also ready.'

"I had heard of Dr. Raffles, and entertained a high opinion of his powers. He is unquestionably an eloquent man; and a man of good sterling sense, of pure taste and sound discretion; he is sure to be pertinent; and in these attributes, and others akin to them, great. He demonstrates a perfect honesty. It is his full soul that speaks out, and no one doubts it—all feel it; and this is eloquence. Take, then, a theme like the fate of the Rothsay Castle, and give it such a man, before an audience whose acquaintances and dear ones perished there, and let him bring heaven and earth, time and eternity, probation and the judgment all together, as they stand connected with such a scene, and in the light of Christianity—and none who can hear can be indifferent. And there were none indifferent on that occasion, I dare to say. It was not the voice of man alone. Man only gave a palpable utterance to the voice of God.

"In the midst of the sermon, and at a moment when the minds and hearts of the audience were entirely captive, under the guidance of the preacher, and with him meditating on death, judgment, and eternity—abstracted from earth, and rapt in thought of a coming world—a sudden, protracted, and apparently an expiring groan came from a distant part of the galleries, reaching every part of the house, and penetrating every heart. It was a startling, thrilling expression of distress, augmented a thousand fold by the circumstances. The self-possession of the preacher, however, in a measure quieted the apprehensions of the audience, by stating that it was a person taken in a fit; and the individual having been carried out, after a pause of two or three minutes the doctor proceeded. What was the real cause of suffering I know not. But the shock at such a moment—when the feelings of the audience were under the highest excitement, and borne away by the most powerful sympathies for the dying and the dead, and forced to think

of future and eternal events—was absolutely appalling.

"Occasionally in the progress of the sermon the doctor was exceedingly powerful—his thoughts and manner, and the tones of his voice, all befitting each other. The interest of the occasion was itself intense; and when the amen was pronounced, that perfect stillness which had reigned for the hour, excepting only the speaker's voice, was succeeded by that singular bustle which an instantaneous change of position in every individual of a great congregation, after having been long chained by eloquence in fixed and motionless attitudes, produces."

#### DEATH-BED OF AN AGED BELIEVER.

THERE is not a more sublime and interesting spectacle than the death-bed of an aged and consistent believer. It is indescribably interesting to listen to his last conversations, and to mark the heavenly aspect of his countenance; it is unutterably grand to observe with what tranquil and fearless composure he sinks to the rest for which he has been prepared by the influence of a lively faith, and by a course of uniform and exemplary godliness; and, while contemplating such a scene, it is almost impossible not to compare it with the glorious sunset of an autumnal evening. The light of Christian experience and character, reflected by the venerable saint as he approaches the close of his career, seems to throw back a hallowed radiance upon all its preceding stages; a hope full of immortality triumphs over every doubt, and puts to flight every fearful apprehension, whereby his soul may have been beforehand beclouded—his enjoyments interrupted—or his usefulness in any measure counteracted; the felt presence of a divine Redeemer gives energy and animation to his voice, imparts a more than mortal lustre to his eye, and gilds the chamber where he languishes with the glories of a better world; and in proportion as he nears the moment of departure, his moral greatness becomes increasingly apparent evidence that all is well with him, for eternity grows brighter and

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brighter, the spirit of the gospel expands and diffuses itself through all the faculties and affections of his mind, so as it has never done before; and a conviction of the divinity of his principles, the safety of his state, and the grandeur of his prospects, gets to be more and more impressive and absorbing; till, at length, every bystander feels himself to be *quite on the verge of heaven*; or says to his neighbour, *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace*; or ejaculates the fervent prayer, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.*—*Dobson.*

#### AFFECTING ANECDOTE.

By a certain burst of water into one of the Newcastle collieries, thirty-five men and forty-one lads were driven into a distant part of the pit, from which there was no possibility of return until the water should be drawn off. While this was effecting, though all possible means were used, the whole number gradually died, from starving or from suffocation. When the bodies were drawn up from the pit, seven of the youths were discovered in a cavern separate from the rest. Among these was one of peculiarly moral and religious habits, whose daily reading of the sacred Scriptures to his widowed mother, when he came up from his labour, had formed the solace of her lonely condition. After his funeral, a sympathizing friend of the neglected poor went to visit her; and while the mother showed him, as a relic of her son, his Bible worn and soiled with constant perusal, he happened to cast his eyes on a candle-box, with which, as a miner, he had been furnished, and which had been brought up from the pit with him; and there he discovered the following affecting record of the filial affection and steadfast piety of the youth. 'In the darkness of the suffocating pit, with a bit of pointed iron, he had engraved on the box his last message to his mother, in these words:—*"Fret not, my dear mother; for we were singing and praising God, while we had time. Mother, follow God more than I did.—Joseph, be a good lad to God and mother."*



## SERMON XL.

### THE NEARNESS OF DEATH.

BY THE REV. THOMAS MACCONNEL.

*"There is but a step between me and death."*—1 Sam. xx. 3.

THAT solemn and startling event,\* the serious consciousness of which sits deep on every countenance, and speaks impressively to every heart in this numerous assembly, calls loudly upon us all to shake off our drowsy disregard to death, and rouse us to the serious and salutary task of numbering our days. The shepherd numbers his sheep; the miser numbers his gold; the general numbers his soldiers; and the sovereign numbers his subjects;—but we omit to number our days. Is this because our days are of less value than sheep, or gold, or soldiers, or subjects? Certainly not; but because we have no disposition to so necessary a work. It is true that we are too prone to number days that we presume are yet *to come*, while we criminally neglect to number those which are gone by, and which, correctly speaking, *only are ours*. A momentary exclamation at the swiftness of time, a passing shock, is, for the most part, all the effect produced by events like that we are assembled to improve, upon guilty mortals, who are any thing but prepared for the awful summons. The necessity of preparation for our mortal exit is now forced upon our attention by this dispensation of Providence. It is perfectly identified with the text—"There is but a step between me and death." This is the declaration of David to Jonathan, whose father was now, with unwearied assiduity and savage determination, seeking to take away his life.

\* Wreck of the *Rothsay Castle* steamboat, in which about ninety persons were lost.

In prosecuting my object I shall observe,

I. That this solemn assertion was *seemingly* true concerning David.

II. That it is *really* true with regard to many now living in the world. And,

III. That it *may* be true with regard to some here present.

I. It was *seemingly* true concerning David. His affecting story is soon told. When, owing to Saul's disobedience of God's orders, the Spirit of the Lord departed from him; an evil spirit, of which kind there are many, came upon him, and a horror of great darkness brooded over his distempered imagination. Royalty was now, as it has not unfrequently been, splendid wretchedness and magnificent misery. Music was recommended to dispel the oppressive melancholy, and the son of Jesse was named as a superior performer on that sweet and ancient instrument, the harp. He was introduced—played, and pleased. After this, and the slaughter of Goliath, he was taken into great favour, and became Saul's armour-bearer. Returning from the field of battle and of victory, the beautiful women of Israel chanted his praises, in strains more laudatory than those in which the monarch was eulogized. Saul was offended, and from that day he watched David with unrelenting jealousy; struck a javelin at his unsuspecting and defenceless enemy, whom, having missed, he hunted now like a partridge on the mountains, determined to kill him. Surrounded by numerous enemies eager to slake

their cruel thirst in his blood, he exclaimed in his extremity to Jonathan, his *only* friend, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death." But this was not correct; there were many steps between him and dissolution. He lived many years after this; composed many psalms; fought many battles; entered into many alliances; wept over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan his son, in a matchless monody; ascended the throne of Israel; died full of riches, and honours, and years; and Solomon his son reigned in his stead.

This teaches us how liable we are to be wrong in our judgments. We can only judge from appearances; therefore we should draw all inferences of importance with caution. Yet this judgment of David's, perhaps, was the instrumental cause of his preservation. It made him cautious. How many evils, which we dread and prepare for, never come upon us! And how many, that we never had the slightest idea of, overwhelm and confound us! Thus Providence sports with our calculations; "man knoweth not his appointed time, but is like the fishes insnared in an evil net," &c. &c., says Solomon.

"Safety consists not in escape  
From dangers of a frightful shape;  
An earthquake may be bid to spare  
The man that's strangled by a hair;  
Fate steals along with silent tread,  
Found oftenest in what least we dread,  
Frowns in the storm with angry brow,  
But in the sunshine strikes the blow."

II. The text is *really* true concerning some individuals now in the world. It is calculated that nine hundred millions of men might be found in both hemispheres of the inhabited globe. It is computed that one individual dies every moment. Time treads a man to death at every step. How true it is, then, that "there is but a step between many and death."

1. Let us, in the first place, look at the great number of the *sick* scattered over the face of this well-peopled world. The poor emaciated invalids who, during the wearisome watches of the sleepless night, long for the dawning morning, and who,

when the earliest sunbeams play upon their pillow, turn away from the oppressive glare, and long for the evening, are slowly dying; they are given up by their physicians, and their decease daily expected;—"there is but a step between them and death."

2. Go into the gloomy cells of condemned criminals, whose life must pay the forfeit of their crimes on the coming morning: see them, by the dim light of the lamp, spending the little time that remains to them in devotional exercises;—"there is but a step between them and death."

3. Look at the combatants that are now preparing for deadly battle; their country's cause palpitates at their heart, and burns on their tongue. They are buckling on their armour; but they will never unbuckle it. They are destined to fall in the struggle. "There is but a step between them and death."

4. Listen to the cries of those mariners in distress; "they are going up to the heavens, and now down to the depths." The ship is unmanageable; her hold is filling with water; she is sinking; the poor wretches are climbing to the shrouds. "There is but a step between them and death."

5. View those men of *apoplectic* structure. How precarious the hold they have of life! Fresh and hale one minute—the next *dead*. How true it is, with regard to some men, that "there is but a step between them and death!"

III. The declaration in the text may be true with regard to some of us. Let us make good our ground at every step.

1. Sentence of death has been passed on all men, "because that all have sinned." Death, which in poetry is called the king of terrors; in philosophy, the negation of existence; in infidelity, annihilation; in law, capital punishment; in theology is the "wages of sin." In Adam, our federal head, we all fell; and, when he was sentenced to die, we his descendants were sentenced also. "In Adam all die, and in Christ shall all be made alive." We read the record of our sentence in the Scriptures, which, though they be thousands of years old—yea,

though it be now six thousand since the judgment was pronounced—yea, though Christ has died for the sins of all who believe, and has for them extracted the sting of death—yet all this does not avail; for,

2. This sentence has never been *repealed*. It has not become obsolete; it is not like the antiquated page of an almanac of past time. It is in daily force. Sentence of death may be, and often is, in secular affairs, *commuted*; but not so here. Neither youth, nor beauty, nor talents, nor piety, nor usefulness, nor accomplishments of any description, can procure a commutation of the equitable sentence. We may and do get a *respite*, but never a *reprieve*.

3. But this respite is not for any given length of time. It is frugally extended only from moment to moment. Those of you, my brethren, who have been raised up from the very borders of the grave, in answer to the prayers of the church, yours is only a *respite*; and that for no stated length of time. A respited criminal knows the length of his respite; we do not. It *may*, then, be true of some of us, that "there is but a step between us and death." Who knows to the contrary? Who can assure us of a moment? Then make provision for what *may* occur. Your house *may* be burnt down; you have insured it. Your property *may* be stolen; you have put it under lock and key, bars and bolts. You *may* take cold from the night air; you have fortified yourselves against it. But you *must* die. Where is your preparation and provision for it? Do you provide against probabilities, and neglect certainties? Do you provide for the body, and neglect the soul? Do you provide for time, and leave eternity to provide for itself? "Will you *first* think seriously of your sins when you are going to judgment for them? Will you *first* think seriously of your mercies when you are about to leave them?" By the preciousness of your souls—the certainty of death—the solemnity of judgment—and the approach of eternity, we call upon you to prepare to meet your God. Amen.

#### THE CHRISTIAN WATCHMAN.

THE faithful watchman watches for seasons when peculiar doctrines may be best inculcated, and particular duties may be best enforced. He watches for *opportunities* when instruction may be most wisely imparted, consolation most affectionately administered, conviction most powerfully deepened, reproof most discreetly given, and sin most strongly condemned. He watches for *providences*, under which the minds of men, being softened, alarmed, or excited, may be most deeply impressed with truth, most easily prompted to duty, or most effectually roused to exertion. Having sworn at the altar of God eternal war against the world, the flesh, and the devil, he watches continually lest the secret seductions or the open assaults of these spiritual foes should distress or destroy his people. He is always on his *watch-tower*, and he *watches in all things*. No enemy can approach the camp without an alarm being sounded.

The most faithful minister may well fear that among the people of his charge there will be found, at the last day, some wicked man whom he had not faithfully warned—some backslider whom he had not tenderly admonished—some hypocrite whom he had not skilfully unmasked—some contemner of God whom he had not fearlessly withstood. Well also may he fear lest there should be found in the day of account some ignorant soul whom he had not plainly instructed—some sorrowful spirit whom he had not gently comforted—some weak brother whom he had not seasonably strengthened—or some thoughtless wanderer whom he had not diligently reclaimed. What, then, may be the dread, and what certainly will be the doom, of the *blind*, or the *ignorant*, or the *dumb*, or the *greedy*, or the *sensual*, or the *slumbering watchman*? Wo to the idle shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye; his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.—*Cawood*.

## SERMON XLI.

### LIFE A JOURNEY.

BY THE REV. R. C. DILLON.

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*"For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers; our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding."—1 Chron. xlix. 15.*

This is the testimony of an old man, of one who had seen what human life is; and who was capable of summing up the total, because he had made himself master of all the items of the account. The young man, indeed, could give the sum; but so different are the colours of life as we look forward to the future, or backward upon the past, that he could give it only prospectively. David gave it retrospectively. He had not merely tasted the cup; he had drank it. He had come to that period of his existence on earth, which led him to consider death as a merciful dismissal from a long and distressing warfare, and as opening a door for him into the mansions of his Father's house above. He had outlived many of his friends, his children, and his comforts. Most of those ties which had connected him with life had been broken; and he was standing on the borders of the grave, just waiting the commission that would join him to the departed multitudes of former ages.

But this is not only the testimony of an old man; it is the evidence of one who could estimate life. There are persons upon whom all the advantages of experience are thrown away. Solomon says that, "though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him." Such persons go through life with such torpid indifference, that none of its occurrences, whether prosperous or adverse, leave any trace on their minds. Their

present plans derive no improvement from that wisdom which the failure of their former plans might teach them; they glide through the world, forgetful of the past, and careless about the future; and at the close of life have gained but little more solid sense and judgment than they had at its commencement. It is not surprising, therefore, that from the experience of such persons the young and inexperienced should gain but little instruction. We all expect that knowledge should be the consequence of a long life; and we turn, therefore, with sorrow and regret, from those who appear not to have grown wiser as they have grown older. And unwilling, as we are, to deny to the aged that veneration and reverence which their privilege obtains, we had rather trust our own eyes in the journey of life, than yield to the guidance of those who have lost their way.

But among those aged travellers we are not to number David. He had not mingled with the world to no purpose; he had seen it in all its varied forms; and, in coming to the conclusion of the text, he had been guided by a long and observant experience.

And be it remarked, moreover, that this is the testimony, not only of an old man, and a wise man, but of a great man. It will be remembered that David was a monarch, an absolute monarch; and this consideration gives peculiar force to his testimony. Had it been made by other men, we might have thought to escape from

such a melancholy conclusion. Had we been told by one whose experience was but little, that we are only "strangers and sojourners, that our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding," we might have considered him as giving utterance rather to the feelings of discontent than the confidence of persuasion; and as speaking not so much of the general state of human life, as of his own share, and his own situation. But the character and eminence of David leave no room for subterfuge; we are compelled to admit his conclusion, because of the soundness and the validity of the premises. He had witnessed the extremes of life. He had been a shepherd boy; and this may account for his delightful adoption of a shepherd and his flock, that occur so frequently in the Psalms; and he was raised from that lowly condition to the summit of all that is great and illustrious in society. He had in his possession whatever power and riches could confer; every power and delight which others possessed he had authority to summons, or wealth to purchase; and all that royal prosperity could supply was accumulated upon him. He had found, however, that the splendour of royalty could contribute very little to the promotion of happiness, could promise him no security from the vicissitudes of life. High though he was placed above the common standard of earthly prosperity, he knew that he was still in the sphere of humanity; and that the highest point of its orbit extends not beyond the region of clouds and storms, by which he was at all times liable to be invaded.

Nor was he a stranger to the difficulties of domestic affliction; for the only son of whom, we are told, he was passionately fond, and whose life seems to have been bound up in his own, was the only son who took up arms against him. Yes, brethren, David knew, from experience, that in every department of human felicity there is a void; and that in the most prosperous life there is some corner possessed by sorrow.

Now, therefore, at the age of three-score years and ten, at the height of prosperity, (for the Jewish nation had never

appeared to be more at home than at the close of David's life,) he is looking upon the past, and the last scenes of his history, and having spread the world in its amount before him when he looks at the total this—this is the sum—"We are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding."

There are two points in the further consideration of this verse on which I shall engage your attention.

*First*, We have here a DESCRIPTION OF HUMAN LIFE. And—

*Secondly*, AN INFERENCE OF CHRISTIAN DUTY.

*First*, We have here a DESCRIPTION OF HUMAN LIFE—a pilgrimage. Our passage through life is represented in Scripture under a variety of striking and expressive images. Sometimes it is compared to an arrow flying through the air, which quickly strikes the mark it aims at; sometimes to a race in which we soon arrive at the destined goal; sometimes to a flower, which to-day is growing in the field, and to-morrow cut down and withered. But there is, perhaps, no figure by which the Christian state on earth is more frequently described, or more aptly illustrated, than by that of a *journey*. The other figures give us an idea of some particulars only in the life of man, to assist his progress to his destined end; but a journey seems to comprehend all its usual circumstances: representing the whole world in all its distinctions, rich and poor, wise and foolish, young and old, all journeying to their everlasting home. In the common journeys of the world some are long, and marked, and crossed, with a great diversity of circumstances: others, again, are short, quietly performed, and passed without any particular occurrence. So with the journey of life. Some are preserved to toil through the various stages of childhood, youth, and manhood, and old age; others, again, have completed their journey ere the noonday brightness beams upon them; and some in the morning of their days. But the resemblances are almost too numerous to be told.

Hence, however, Christians are styled "strangers and sojourners."

Now a stranger, I need not tell you, is the opposite to a home station; and the Christian is travelling through a strange country, in which he is commanded to execute his work with diligence, and pursue his course homeward with alacrity. The fruits which he sees by the way-side he gathers with caution; and he drinks of the stream with moderation. He is thankful when the sun shines upon his progress, and his way is pleasant; but if the way be rough and the weather stormy he cares not, he is but a traveller; and you know if, in an earthly journey, the accommodation of the inn be not entirely what we wish, we bear it easily, it is of little consequence, it is the habitation only of a night, in the morning we are gone. And so it is with the Christian; he is prepared for vicissitudes; but he is travelling to a better country, a country of unclouded light and undisturbed serenity. He finds, also, that when the accommodations to be given are poor, he is less disposed to loiter. He knows also, that to the very end of life his journey will be through an enemy's country, where he has multitudes to oppose him; that his way is beset with snares; temptations crowd around him to betray him from his course, and to check his spiritual advancement. He knows the very atmosphere of the world induces drowsiness; so that, to the very last, it becomes him to be circumspect and collected. Frequently, therefore, does he examine the progress he has made, whereabouts he is, how he has got forward, and whether he is travelling in a right direction. Sometimes his progress appears to be considerable, at other times it is slender; and at all times it is less than he wishes. At one time he is cheered with hope and gladdened by success; at another the clouds hover too many over his head, he is disquieted by doubts and damped by disappointments.

Such is a sketch of the Christian's journey through life. He is a "stranger," and, as David describes him further, he is a "sojourner." This last expression is borrowed from the usage of

the Arabs, who pitch their tents in the evening and strike them the next morning. In the epistle to the Hebrews, a list of venerable men of former days:—"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were *strangers* and pilgrims on the earth." You will recollect that such was the confession of the good old man, Jacob, upon a question put to him by the Egyptian monarch: "And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." And such as was Jacob's life, is our life. Oh, brethren, that we could embrace this grand sentiment: "*this is not your rest.*" Your life, brethren, at the longest, is a short journey, and unless the end is regarded, it is an ineffectual journey. "We are but strangers and sojourners, as all our fathers were." It is no new thing in the character of David's life; he was that, only, which all his fathers had been. And we too, brethren, may assure ourselves that life, in all future periods, will continue to be what it has been to generations past,—"*Our days are as a shadow.*" What is a shadow? Let a man look back on his own life, and he will get the answer to the question; let him take a serious and impartial retrospect of his former history, and then give in his evidence; and—"we are strangers and sojourners as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding," will be the amount of his testimony.

Let me appeal to the older persons in the church this morning, some of the age of the writer of the text; let them tell us, or rather tell themselves, what it is. And will you not say, dear brethren, that it has been a shadow? What has been grasped—what has been obtained? I hope of none of you it may be said, that he has sown to the wind and reaped the whirlwind. I know how to make it substance, you know how to make it sub-

stances; but are you doing it? one thing is needful—an interest in Christ, and being clothed in the mantle of his spotless righteousness; and having all your iniquities cast behind Jesus' back into the depths of the sea. That one thing will give substance to this shadow, and will furnish something to grasp in the flittings of life.

Now, supposing our days on the earth were not a shadow—supposing our life was as substantial as it is shadowy, then it wants permanency—then there would be deeper regret at parting with it than that which we even now feel. But how, if all were substance instead of shadow, how would it answer the purpose of spiritual discipline? Unsatisfactory as its happiest department is said to be, its pleasures are too apt to corrupt our hearts. How awful, then, would the consequences be did it yield us more complete enjoyment! If, with all its trouble, we are declared to be too much attached to it, how entirely might it have riveted our affections if no trouble had been mingled with its pleasures; if all its shadows had been substance! God, therefore, has mercifully tinged all sublunary things with vanity on purpose to make us feel that this is not our rest, that here we are, if we may so say, not in our proper place, not arrived at our true home. If, therefore, we expect to find any substantial happiness on earth, we pursue a phantom; we increase the agitation and unhappiness of life by engaging in a chase entirely fruitless,—“For we are strangers and sojourners: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.” Life is so with all ranks. I must remind you, that this is the confession of a monarch, who had given to him power, a crown, a sceptre, splendour, and dominion; and yet, all was shadow, and he says, too, “there is none abiding.” The literal translation of the word “abiding” is, there is no *expectation*: “our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is no *expectation*.” Life is so shadowy that nothing can be expected from it.

Now I wish you to mark, brethren, that this confession was not made before

a select company of pious friends; it was not a sentiment formed in the stillness of retirement, as he was writing in an animated strain on some topic of religion, and when the unfettered mind might be allowed to give full utterance to the fervency of his devotion; but it was a public confession, made before a full convention of all his people, his princes, and his sons, who succeeded him. To some modern minds, and according to the low standard of present Christianity, it might have been deemed more prudent to have withheld from so grave and solemn a subject before his own son, now rising into life, and especially from before a convention of the whole nation. But David was not a man, like some of you, to shrink from a bold avowal of religious truth. He was one of those eminent and fearless saints, who deprecated the thought of not being honestly explicit; or to consult the wishes of a court or a kingdom, at the expense of sincerity; and, therefore, he cannot refrain from declaring publicly what he felt cordially and deeply impressed with,—the vanity of all sublunary things, and so utters the heart dictated confession—“We,” monarchs as we are, and thou, monarch though thou soon wilt be, “we are strangers and sojourners before God: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is no expectation from it.” Do you think, then, brethren, that when David's pilgrimage below had touched upon its close, and he turned aside his eyes from scenes of mortality, it was to him any subject of regret that he was permitted no longer to remain on earth, that he was taken from all his riches and enchanting pleasures, and for ever to quit that world, of whose grandeur he formed so conspicuous a part? Oh! no, other objects occupied his mind; other thoughts engaged his attention, and will continue to engage it for ever: all things became changed in a moment, and, viewed from the pure and ineffable light of the heavenly regions, the lustre of a diadem is scarcely visible, majesty itself emanates a feeble and a sickly ray, and all ranks and conditions of men appear to be but so many troops of pilgrims in different journeys, toiling through the same

vale of tears, and distinguished only by different degrees of rank.

So much, then, touching a brief description of human life.

Let us hasten, in the second place, to gather from it AN INFERENCE OF CHRISTIAN DUTY. And it might scarcely be supposed, although any thing might be supposed of human nature in an unsanctified state, that, knowing ourselves to be but strangers and sojourners, and that all our days on the earth are but as a shadow, we should go through the journey of life with no concern about its termination. This thoughtlessness, indeed, is the most astonishing phenomenon of nature, and shows what a wreck the mind has suffered. Our great God has made man a prospective creature; and he gives proof of this prospectiveness in every action of his life. He has endowed him with a capacity of comparing the present with the past, and also of anticipating the future. And thus it is, too, we are perpetually dwelling with anxious rumination on scenes which are yet remote; we are capable of carrying our views, and taking our inquiries, to a period much more distant than the limits of our present existence; we are capable of plunging into the depth of future duration; and of identifying ourselves with the sentiments and opinions of the distant ages. How is it, then, that we find it so difficult to prevail on men to fix their attention on that other world, that real future existence, which reason assures us is probable, which the Bible teaches us is certain, and to which all the thousands of mankind are travelling every moment? How is it that the professed followers of Him, especially, who descended from heaven, who came forth from the Father to conduct us there, are so indisposed to turn their thoughts and contemplation to that unchanging state of being on which they are so shortly to enter? It is not because we are so much enchanted with the country through which we are journeying, as to be incapable of diverting our attention from it. This may be the case, however, with some of the congregation, but it is not so with all; for we are continually disquieted by disappointments;

and we meet with strange usage in our journey, which convinces us we are not at home. It is not because we are seldom warned or reminded, that our journey must shortly end; for every funeral bell every opened grave, every symptom of decay within and of change without us, teaches us that we are but "strangers and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding."

Now if any other event of far inferior moment were ascertained by evidence, which made but a distant approach to that which attests the certainty of another world—had we actual assurance, for example, that after a very limited, though uncertain period, we should be called to emigrate unto a distant land, whence we were never to return, the intelligence would fill every bosom with solicitude, it would become the theme of our tongue, the anxious topic of every conversation; and we should avail ourselves, with the utmost eagerness, of all the means of information respecting the prospects which await us, in that unknown country; much of our attention would be occupied in preparing for our departure, we should cease to consider the place we now inhabit as our home; and nothing would be considered as of moment, but as it bore upon our future destination. How strange is it, then, that with the certainty that every man of us possesses, of shortly entering into another world, we avert our eyes as much as possible from the prospect, that we seldom permit it to penetrate us, and that the moment the recollection returns we hasten to dismiss it as an unwelcome intrusion! Is it not surprising that the very volume which we profess to recognise as the record of our immortality, as the sole depository of whatever information it is possible to obtain of that unknown country, the map that will guide us to it, should be suffered to lay beside us unopened, unread, and altogether unattended to. But, brethren, if we had known, and surely there is not one in this house who does not know it, the Bible to be the only unerring road book to that land to which we are travelling, oh why after



consulting it in the closet, if, at least, you do consult it there—but I am not speaking to those who do not consult the Bible, for, I say, if we acknowledge it to be the only unerring road-book to heaven—why, after consulting it in the closet in the morning, do we forget it when we set out on our journey; and not only neglect the directions it affords, but pursue contrary paths of our own devising.

Oh, dear brethren, let me beseech you, now that a kind Providence has permitted you to pass over the old year and to begin a new one, to remember that you are “pilgrims and sojourners, that all your days on earth are only shadows.” Oh, do not act this year, at least so much of it as you may be permitted to see, as you have, perhaps, in years that are past: as if the pleasures and occupations of the present life were matter and substance, and as if those of heaven were dreams and shadows. But let your deportment this year, at least, be like that of citizens of heaven, who are only travelling through the earth to the kingdom of their reconciled Father who is in heaven, and who are anxious to “depart and be with Christ, which is far better;” and whose chief care is to journey on that narrow road which will conduct you safely to the promised land of rest. Oh, endeavour to display more of the mind of Christ as you draw nearer the throne of Christ, and then you shall share in the glory of Christ. As heaven is your home, there let your affections be.

To those in church, who may be forward in the journey of life, I would say, and, oh, may the Holy Spirit of God—without whom all descriptions of human life, and all inferences of Christian duty will be utterly powerless—oh, may that Holy Spirit cause the saying to sink down into your heart, that, shadowy as is your life, eternity will turn the whole into substance. Every action, every word, every thought will be weighed on the day of judgment, and will be substance in the scale, either for your condemnation or acceptance; he that is unjust will be unjust still, and he that is holy will be holy still. The vanity which adheres to the world in every form, when

its pleasures and occupations are regarded as ultimate objects, is at once corrected, when viewed in connexion with a boundless eternity; and whatever may be their intrinsic value, they rise into dignity and importance when considered as the seed of a future harvest, as a path which, how narrow and obscure however, leads to honour and immortality. Nothing is trivial which is referred to such a system; nothing is vain and frivolous which has the slightest bearing on such an awful reality.

As you value, then, dear brethren, the eternal welfare of your souls, bethink yourselves this morning whether, in your journey to another world, you are walking in the narrow way, choosing God for your Father, and the Redeemer for your elder brother; or whether you are hastening on in your thoughtless career, in the broad road that leads to destruction. Remember that on earth all is shadow; but all beyond is substance. Oh be careful in the great and eventful journey, on which we have all set out, that none of the pleasures and occupations of this life assume such magnitude, as to intercept our view of the final prospect. There is, verily, no abiding, no expectation, in any thing or from any thing that we meet with in our passage through life but the one thing needful.

Let me implore you, then, dear brethren, to raise your affections above the perishing things of earth, to those things which are above. Plan for eternity, and choose the unchangeable God as your father, knowing that you have here “no continuing city, but seek one to come; a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Let the Lord Jesus be your leader and guide; under his conduct immediately set out, if you have not yet begun the journey to the heavenly Jerusalem; and in due time he shall bring you to the city of the great King, where you shall continue, not for a year only, but for ever; and where all your shadows shall be changed into substance—even unto that glorious inheritance of the saints in light, which is “incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away.”

And to those who are desirous to gain

fresh strength for the remainder of their journey, I would say, come now to the table of the Lord, where wisdom shall be dispensed to those who are ignorant, and strength to those who are weary, yea, come this—the first Sabbath of a new year, with enlarged expectations, relying on the unsearchable riches of Christ; and according to your faith in the ordinance so shall it be done unto you.

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SCRIPTURE AXIOMS RESPECTING MONEY.

1. GIVING is the surest way to getting.

"There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth."

2. God is the sovereign proprietor of money.

"The silver is mine, and the gold is mine."

3. We are accountable both for our own, and for that intrusted to us by others.

"What hast thou, that thou hast not received?"

4. There is judgment required in the charitable bestowment of it.

"Do good to all, but especially to the household of faith."

5. There are few mischiefs that are not remotely or intimately connected with covetousness.

"The love of money is the root of all evil."

6. Money ought not to be made to minister to self-indulgence, while the interests of religion can be promoted by means of it.

"Wo to them that live in ceiled houses, while the Lord's house is not built."

7. The poorest man may give a something with acceptance.

"This poor widow hath given all she had."

8. Persons of real worth are sometimes destitute of money.

"Then John answered, Silver and gold have I none."

9. True enjoyment is not to be found in wealth.

"He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver."

10. Every man should punctually discharge his pecuniary debts.

"Owe no man any thing, but to love one another."

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FIFTY GIVES NO EXEMPTION FROM SUFFERING.

A good man is by no means exempt from the danger of suffering by the crimes of others; even his goodness may raise him enemies of implacable malice and restless perseverance: the good man has never been warranted by heaven from the treachery of friends, the disobedience of children, or the dishonesty of a wife;—he may see his cares made useless by profusion, his instructions defeated by perverseness, and his kindness rejected by ingratitude;—he may languish under the infamy of false accusations, or perish reproachfully by an unjust sentence.

A good man is subject, like other mortals, to all the influences of natural evil: his harvest is not spared by the tempest, nor his cattle by the murrain; his house flames like others in a conflagration; nor have his ships any peculiar power of resisting hurricanes;—his mind, however elevated, inhabits a body subject to innumerable casualties, of which he must always share the dangers and the pains;—he bears about him the seeds of disease, and may linger away a great part of his life under the tortures of the gout or stone; at one time groaning with insufferable anguish, at another, dissolved in listlessness and languor.—*Johnson.*

## SERMON XLII.

### THE DUTY OF EARLY SEEKING CHRIST.

PREACHED

BY THE REV. A. GUN, A.M.

TO SABBATH SCHOOL CHILDREN, IN GLASGOW

*"Early will I seek thee."*—Ps. lxxiii. 1.

You know, little children, who spake these words. It was David, the king of Israel. Though he was a great king, and had many things to occupy his attention, he yet considered God to be the chief object of his desire. He could not be happy without God. But you know the Lord is a great God, and to be feared and had in reverence of all that draw near unto him; and, therefore, you must seek God through the Lord Jesus Christ. When John the Baptist saw Jesus he pointed him out to his disciples as the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John i. 29. 36. And when his disciples heard this, they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him, and said unto them, ver. 38, "What seek ye?" Now, David and John's disciples were seeking the same thing; for sinners, as we are, cannot approach the glorious presence of Jehovah but as he is revealed in the Saviour.

Some of you little children may be inclined to ask,

1. *Why* you should seek Christ?

You know that the Lord Jesus Christ is a very glorious Being. He is adorned with all the perfections of God. He is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. He is called in Scripture "the pearl of great price"—that is, nothing is so valuable in heaven or earth as to be

compared with Jesus. He is God's "unspeakable gift," and men or angels cannot rehearse his excellencies. He is "the Day-star from on high, and the Sun of righteousness," from whom proceed light, and warmth, and every comfort and blessing.

And what are some of those blessings which God is ready to bestow on those who seek Christ?

1. The pardon of sin.

Every one of us, young and old, needs to have his iniquities blotted out. The word of God informs us that we are born in sin, and brought forth in iniquity; we are the children of wrath, and liable to destruction. You know that when God destroyed the people of the old world, because their wickedness was great on the face of the earth, little children like you were drowned, along with their parents and friends; and this shows us that little children are sinners as well as others; for God, who is a just God, would not punish them if they were not guilty. And if you think on your own hearts, and consider your own conduct, do you not feel that you do many things which are wrong? Have you not been thinking your own thoughts, and speaking your own words, and doing your own works, on this holy Sabbath? This is sin, and you need to be forgiven your iniquity. How much should you and I desire to obtain the happiness of which

David speaks in the thirty-second psalm ! "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile."

We can do nothing for ourselves. I will tell you a story about the Rev. David Dickson, a good minister that was once in Edinburgh. Being asked, when on his death-bed, how he found himself, he answered, "I have taken my good deeds and bad deeds, and thrown them together in a heap, and fled from them both to Christ, and in him I have peace." He felt that he could do nothing for himself. When he inquired, like the prophet Micah, (vi. 6, 7,) "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God ? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old ? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil ? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul ?" He found that none of these things could be of any avail. "There is no name given under heaven among men, by which we can be saved, but the name of Christ." I read lately of a certain man on the Malabar coast, who had inquired of various devotees and priests how he might make atonement for his sins ; and he was directed to drive iron spikes, sufficiently blunted, through his sandals, and on these spikes he was directed to place his naked feet, and to walk about four hundred and eighty miles. If, through loss of blood, or weakness of body, he was obliged to halt, he might wait for healing and strength. He undertook the journey, (for what will not a person, awakened to a sense of sin, attempt to get rid of the burden of it ?) and while he halted under a large shady tree, where the gospel was sometimes preached, one of the missionaries came and preached in his hearing from these words : "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." While he was preaching the man rose up, threw off his torturing sandals, and cried out aloud, "this is what I want," and he became a lively witness

that the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin. And, little children, what peace, and comfort, and hope, and joy does it produce in the mind, even in the most distressing circumstances ! I have read about a dying soldier and a dying officer. The soldier was wounded at the battle of Waterloo, and carried by his companion to some distance, and laid down at the foot of a tree, where his companion, at his request, read to him a few verses of the Bible, upon which he said, "I die happy, for I possess the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." A little while after one of the officers passed him, and, seeing him in a very exhausted state, asked him how he did. He answered him as he said formerly to his companion, and then expired. The officer was soon after mortally wounded, and when surrounded by his brother officers, full of anguish and dismay, he cried out, "Oh ! I would give ten thousand worlds that I possessed that peace which gladdened the heart of the dying soldier whom I saw lying under the tree. I know nothing of this peace ! I die miserable ! for I die in despair !"

Now, little children, you must seek Jesus, that you may have your sins forgiven, and that you may live at peace with God, and die in safety and in happiness.

2. Another blessing which Christ gives, and for which you should seek him, is *holiness*.

You know, little children, that God is "glorious in holiness," and that he says to each of us, "O do not that abominable thing which my soul hateth !" We are in his sight "altogether as an unclean thing." Our hearts are full of malice, and pride, and impurity. We require that God would create in us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us. Now, Christ cleanseth the souls of those that come to the fountain which has been opened for sin and uncleanness ; and his Holy Spirit is sent to sanctify the soul. The people of God who, like the Corinthians, have been "washed, and justified, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God," are able to sing "unto Him that

loved us, and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood." When a person is brought, like the apostle Paul, to glory in nothing but in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, the world is thereby crucified unto him, and he is crucified unto the world. I will tell you a story on this subject. Mr. Marshall, author of the "Gospel Mystery of Sanctification," having been for several years under distress of mind, consulted Dr. Goodwin, an eminent divine, giving him an account of the state of his soul, and particularizing his sins which lay heavy on his conscience. In reply he told him he had forgot to mention the greatest sin of all—the sin of unbelief, not believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, for the remission of his sins, and for sanctifying his nature. On this he set himself to the studying and preaching Christ, and attained to eminent holiness, great peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

If you, little children, wish to be made holy, as God is holy, that God may have pleasure in seeing you, as olive plants trained up beside the water-courses, you must seek Christ, and wait on him for his Spirit to sprinkle you with his peace-speaking and purifying blood. You have great need of being made holy, and it is a difficult thing to make you holy. You know it is a difficult thing to break the hard flinty rock. Now, your hearts are compared in Scripture to the adamant and to the nether millstone; and the more holy you become, the more you will feel your want of holiness. I will tell you what Mr. Newton, an excellent minister, once said when reading the text: "By the grace of God I am what I am." He said, I am not what I *ought* to be. Ah! how imperfect and deficient! I am not what I *wish* to be; but I abhor what is evil, and would cleave to that which is good. I am not what I *hope* to be; soon, soon I shall put off mortality, and with it all sin and imperfection. Yet, though I am not what I *ought* to be, nor what I *wish* to be, nor what I *hope* to be, I can truly say I am *not what I once was*—a slave to sin and Satan; and I can heartily join with the apostle, and acknow-

ledge, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

3. The only other blessing which I shall now mention, that you shall get by seeking Christ, is *eternal life* in heaven.

It is said, in one of the psalms, "The Lord is a sun and shield; he will give grace and glory." He gives grace here, in forgiving the sins of those who seek him, and, by the power of his grace, he subdues sin in the soul; and he will give glory hereafter, in bringing every one of those whom he pardons and purifies to heaven, to be ever in the presence and enjoying the favour of God. He is saying to you now, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." You know that Moses, though adopted into the family of Pharaoh's daughter, and exalted to the honours of Pharaoh's kingdom, preferred joining himself to the Lord's people, and to suffer affliction with them, than to enjoy all the treasures of Egypt, and all the pleasures of sin for a season, that he might have the dignity of being numbered among the children of God; and we read that he did so because "he had respect to the recompense of reward."

You know, little children, that there are only two places beyond the grave, to one or other of which we must all go. When Christ was on the cross there were two thieves crucified, one on either side of him; one of them repented of his sins, and applied for help to Christ, saying, "Lord, remember me when thou comest to thy kingdom," and the Lord answered him graciously: "This night shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Had not he felt his sin, and applied to Christ and obtained mercy, what would have become of him? He would have shared the fate of the impenitent thief, in being abandoned to destruction; as soon as death arrived, he, like the rich man of whom we read, would "lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment," instead of being, like Lazarus, carried to Abraham's bosom by the angels of God.

Little children, it is a fearful thing to

fall into the hands of the living God. God is a consuming fire to all who do not seek him in Christ Jesus. The wrath of God abideth on each of us, unless freed from it by Christ. You can know somewhat of the dreadful effects of God's curse. You remember that once Christ, when hungry, passed by a fig tree, upon which there was no fruit, and Christ cursed the tree, and it withered away. How terrible if the wrath of Christ should fall on us! You have heard that the devils in hell were once angels in heaven; but, as soon as they sinned against God, his wrath was poured upon them. And, oh! what a change took place on them! They were cast into that lake of fire and brimstone which was then prepared for the devil and his angels, and the wicked people who will not seek Christ to "deliver them from the wrath to come." "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus." A little boy, on his death-bed, was asked where he was going? He answered, to heaven. Being farther asked why he wished to go there? he answered, because Christ is there. And being again asked what he would do if Christ should leave heaven? he replied, I will go with him whithersoever he goeth.

These, my young friends, are gifts worth the seeking, and I hope some of you have been excited to inquire,

II. *How* you are to seek Christ, so as to find him.

1. You must *believe* in Christ: "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

Some of you know the questions of the Shorter Catechism. "What is faith in Jesus Christ? Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel." You must believe all that is said in the Scriptures about Christ, who is "able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by him." You must feel your need of Christ, and believe in him to the saving of your souls. I will tell you a very pretty story, from which you may learn the nature of faith. "Children," says Cecil, "are capable of very early impres-

sions. I imprinted on my daughter the idea of faith at a very early age. She was playing one day with a few beads, which seemed wonderfully to delight her. Her whole soul was absorbed in her beads. I said, 'My dear, you have some pretty beads there.' 'Yes, papa.' 'And you seem vastly pleased with them. Well, now, throw them behind the fire.' The tears started into her eyes; she looked earnestly at me, as if she ought to have a reason for so cruel a sacrifice. 'Well, my dear, do as you please: but you know I never told you to do any thing which I did not think would be for your good;' she looked at me a few moments longer, and then, summoning up all her fortitude, her breast heaving with the effort, she dashed them into the fire. 'Well,' said I, 'there let them lie; you shall hear more about them another time; but I say no more of them now.' Some days after I bought her a boxful of larger beads, and toys of the same kind. When I returned home I opened the treasure, and set it before her; she burst into tears with excessive joy. 'These, my child,' said I, 'are yours, because you believed me when I told you to throw those paltry beads behind the fire; your obedience has brought you this treasure. But now, my dear, remember as long as you live what *faith* is. I did all this to teach you the meaning of faith. You threw your beads away when I bade you, because you had faith in me that I never advised you but for your good. Put the same trust in God; believe every thing that he says in his word. Whether you understand it, or not, have faith in him that he means your good.'

Now, little children, remember what faith is, and put it in practice, for without faith you cannot be interested in Christ, or have any of the blessings which are treasured up in him.

2. In seeking Christ, you must *pray* to him.

Although God knows what we require, yet that does not supersede the necessity of our imploring the blessing needed by us. God knew what Solomon needed; but he said to him, "Ask what I shall give thee." When the blind beggar,

Bartimeus, heard Christ passing by, and he cried, saying, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me," Christ knew well what he needed, and what he wished; yet he put to him the question "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee." Again, when the children of Israel were in the land of their captivity, God determined that at the end of seventy years they should be restored to their own country; but he said, "yet for all these things I will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it unto them."

Probably some of you, little children, and some persons who are grown up, may be saying that they cannot pray. This will be no excuse, for God has promised to instruct those who wish to be taught to pray, just as Christ taught his disciples to pray in those interesting words which I hope you all know, and which have been appropriately called the Lord's prayer. "Our Father which art in heaven," &c., as you will find them recorded in the sixth chapter of Matthew, at the ninth verse. You can easily remember such a prayer as that offered up by the thief on the cross: "*Lord, remember me when thou comest to thy kingdom;*" or that of Bartimeus: "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me;" or the prayer of the publican, when he went up with the Pharisee to the temple to pray: "God be merciful to me a sinner." I remember a story about a Hottentot who was under deep convictions of sin, and who did not know how to pray, being present at family worship at his master's house, was taught how to pray by hearing the parable of the Pharisee and the publican read. While the prayer of the Pharisee was read, the poor Hottentot thought within himself, "This is a *good* man; here is nothing for me;" but when the master came to the prayer of the publican—"God be merciful to me a sinner"—"This suits me," he cried; "now I know how to pray;" and he continued to put up that prayer until he found mercy. Prayer is the key to heaven. By it Elijah shut up the skies; so that there was neither dew nor rain on the land for a long space of time. By prayer Jacob placed a ladder, whose foot

was on earth, and its top in heaven, upon which the angels of God ascended and descended. By prayer Daniel shut the lions' mouths, so that they could not hurt him when he was cast into their den. By prayer Samson shook the Philistines' temple, and destroyed the idolaters it contained. By prayer Peter was delivered from prison, for the church interceded with God for him, and the angel of the Lord was sent to rescue him from his perilous situation. "Pray, therefore, without ceasing."

3. You must seek Christ by studying the Bible, and by hearing the gospel preached.

The Bible is God's book. It tells us of God and of Christ, and of every thing which we have to do. You know that the apostle Paul commended Timothy in that, "from a child he knew the Scriptures, which are able to make wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus." I will tell you a story about an Irish boy who loved the Scriptures. He was one day going to one of the Bible schools, that is, a school where they are taught to read and to understand the Bible, for in many schools in Ireland they are not taught to read the Bible; and in many schools in this country they are not taught to understand it, although they may be able to read it. On his way to school he was met by a popish priest, who was not so averse to the Scriptures as most of his brethren are. The priest asked the boy what book it was which he carried under his arm? "It is a will, sir," said the boy. "What will?" rejoined the priest. "The last will and testament that Jesus Christ left to me, and to all who desire to claim a title to the property therein bequeathed," replied the boy. "What did Christ leave you in that will?" "A kingdom, sir." "Where does that kingdom lie?" "It is the kingdom of heaven, sir." "And do you expect to reign as a king there?" "Yes, sir, as joint-heir with Christ." "And will not every person get there as well as you?" "No, sir: none can get there but those that claim their title to that kingdom on the ground of this will." The priest asked several other questions, to which the boy

gave such satisfactory answers as quite astonished him. "Indeed," said he, "you are a good little boy: take care of the book wherein God gives you such precious promises; believe what he has said, and you will be happy here and hereafter." But when you read the word of God, little children, remember that you cannot understand the wondrous things of God's law until your eyes are opened by the Spirit of God. You must pray to God for his Spirit to enlighten you in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. You remember that, when Hagar and her son Ishmael were cast out from the house of Abraham, the child was ready to perish for thirst, and that, although there was a well of water near at hand, she knew not of it until the Lord sent his angel to point it out to her. Therefore you must wait upon God for his Spirit. And when attending the house of God, which you should always do with your parents and friends, you ought to listen to what is said, as if addressed alone to you; and you should be praying for an interest in what is declared by the minister from the Bible. The next story should instruct you how to act when listening to what is preached. A little girl once heard a minister preaching from the text, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom." Isaiah xl. 11. And when asked about the sermon, she said that she was wishing, all the time the minister was preaching, that she was one of Christ's lambs. Mr. Patison, the minister, said to her, "What a happy day would it be in Bristol street, had all my hearers been employed in a similar manner."

This is the way you are to seek Christ—by faith, by prayer, by reading and hearing God's blessed word. And, oh! little children, what a privilege have you in having such excellent teachers to inform you how you are to seek Christ! But, probably, some of you little children are thinking that you are too young to seek Christ, and that it will be time enough to seek him when you get older. And this leads me to consider briefly,

### III. The advantage of seeking Him early.

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1. If Christ is worthy that you should seek him at all, the sooner you do so the better. And you are to seek him while he is to be found, and call on him while near. He is as deserving *now* as ever he was, or as he shall be at any future time. And "*now* is the accepted time." "To-day," saith the Lord, "if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts." A time may come when he shall not be found, though sought. You have heard of the foolish virgins, that when the Bridegroom came they were not ready to go with him into heaven, though earnestly wishing to get admission there. And you remember what is told us of Esau, that in consequence of having sold his birthright, the blessing was also denied him, although he earnestly sought it with tears. Your hearts are more tender now than they will be after they are "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Delay is dangerous. Felix, when Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, trembled, and answered, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee;" but *this* expected time never arrived. And you know the history of the young ruler who came to Christ, saying, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" When he heard that he must leave all, and follow Christ, "he went away sorrowful, for he was very rich"—thus proving that "the love of money is the root of all evil;" and that "it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God;" and that we should seek Christ before the mind is fully occupied with other things, which will not easily be dislodged. Therefore you must seek him early. But,

2. Another reason for seeking him early is, that you may die very soon, and if you have found Christ, your friends will be comforted.

Do you know, little children, that about one-third of all the children born die in infancy? Now, if you do not seek Christ, and find him before you die, you cannot go to heaven. I remember reading a story about a little girl at Portsea, who died at nine years of age; and one

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day in her illness she said to her aunt, with whom she lived, "When I am dead I should like Mr. Griffin to preach a sermon to children, to persuade them to love Jesus Christ, to obey their parents, not to tell lies, but to think about dying and going to heaven. I have been thinking," said she, "what text I should like him to preach from—2d Kings iv. 26. You are the Shunamite, Mr. G. is the prophet, and I am the Shunamite's child. When I am dead, I dare say you will be grieved, though you need not. The prophet will come to see you, and when he says, 'How is it with the child?' you may say, 'It is well.' I am sure it will then be well with me, for I shall be in heaven, singing the praises of God. You ought to think it well too." Mr. G. accordingly fulfilled the wish of this pious child. And, children, if you die early, after seeking and finding Christ, how happy will your friends whom you have left behind be in the assurance of your being blessed in heaven! There was once an infidel and profligate youth, who had disregarded the pious instructions of his parents, but who one day went to hear a sermon with them. The subject of discourse was, *the heavenly state*; the nature of the happiness, employment, and company of the spirits of just men made perfect, were beautifully and affectingly described. While the whole congregation were in ecstacy, the parents of this youth were in tears. When they came home, the son asked why they were sad during the sermon, as they were known to be good people. The mother answered, that her sorrow arose from the fear that the son of her womb and of her vows should be banished at last from the celestial paradise. This cautious admonition, sanctioned by the father, found its way to the youthful heart of her child, and issued in his conversion.

3. The only other reason I will urge for your seeking Christ early, is the increase of happiness, here and hereafter, which will be thereby secured to you.

I never read of any one that repented of seeking Christ too early. You are to come to Christ for happiness. God says

that "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." God's favour is life, and his loving-kindness is better than life. Some people would lead you to think otherwise than the word of God says of a religious life. Matthew Henry, the author of the excellent commentary on the Bible, left this as his dying testimony, "that a life spent in the service of God, and communion with him, is the most comfortable and pleasant life that any one can live in the world." You know, little children, that sin is the cause of all the misery in the world; and that if you seek Christ early, you will be kept from many sins into which those who seek not Christ are liable to fall, and which, when set in order before them afterwards, will force them to say, "a man may bear his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" And the longer you have received Christ, and the greater your advances in the divine life, the more "meet will you be for the inheritance of the saints in light;" the higher degree of glory you will be capable of receiving. We are told in the fifteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians, that "there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for one star differeth from another star in glory;" thus intimating that he who soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, while he who soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully." Though all the inhabitants of heaven will be happy, we are taught to believe that there will be companies of the redeemed encircling the throne of God at a nearer and at a more remote distance; that by divine appointment the station on high will be assigned according to the progress now made in conformity to the divine image; that Abraham the father of the faithful, and David the man according to God's own heart, and John the beloved disciple of our Lord, and such as have been long in Christ, will be placed in a more advantageous position than the thief on the cross, and such like, whose conversion was instantly succeeded by his introduction to the paradise above. May God bless his word, and to his name be all the praise. Amen.

## SERMON XLIII.

MISSIONARY EFFORTS FOUNDED UPON THE PRINCIPLES AND CLAIMS OF REVELATION.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM BENGOLLYER, D.D.

*"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."—Psalm ii. 8.*

FOURTEEN years have elapsed since I had the privilege of pleading the cause of missions, on one of these grand anniversaries, in another place. Most of those for whose encouragement the present service is appointed, and who in its announcement, were justly designated as forming "the future hope of the society," were then in the thoughtlessness of childhood; many of them in the helplessness of infancy; and some of them unborn. Those who then were not, have received a being upon which immortality is impressed; and of that existence, the commencement of which was as yesterday, there can be no close: upon it the destinies of eternity are suspended; and their final character must be fixed within the limits of a life, the duration of which is as uncertain to the individual as it is necessarily short in itself. Those who then thought, and spake, and understood as children, have put away childish things—have passed from the dawn of consciousness to the brightness of intellectual day, and have begun to think seriously, as we trust, for themselves, while they have consecrated their earliest energies in a combined attempt to effect instrumentally the salvation of others. Time has, in the mean while, been effecting changes not less important in other quarters. The fathers of the society have many of them fallen asleep; others are sowed down under the weight of years; many who then were vigorous, have descended far into the vale of life;

and those who bear the heat and burden of the day now, are looking round them for other labourers, when they shall be summoned to repose. Under all these circumstances, their attention and their hopes are fixed upon you; their desires and their prayers alike concentrate in the rising generation; and in the existence and multiplication of juvenile auxiliary missionary societies; in the increasing interest which the youth of both sexes take in this great cause; in the multitudes of young persons, who through their sanctuaries on these occasions, they receive a most gratifying and convincing pledge, that their most enlarged expectations will be realized.

The advocates of Christian missions are now called upon to occupy ground in some respects different from that which they were required at that time to maintain. Infidelity lay at the foot of Christianity exhausted, and apparently expiring. It had provoked a combat, to which it was not equal; it had girded on its armour with boasting, and was stripped of it with disgrace. It had entered the field with confidence, and called the world to witness its triumphs. The world obeyed the call, and beheld its defeat. The principles which opposed religion, desolated Europe, and disorganized society. Amidst convulsions which threatened to destroy the foundations of social order, the noble institutions for the promotion of the gospel arose, and proved the divinity of their origin, by their superiority

to human contingencies and independence of human politics. Covered with shame, infidelity retreated, and religion went forth from conquering to conquer. The advocates of missions had then to plead its cause with professors of Christianity themselves—with men who, admitting the authority of revelation, stopped short of its grand design; or who were fettered in their judgments by the chains of a party spirit; with those who, granting the ultimate triumphs of the cross, forgot the means presented for its advancement; and who, while they denounced as enthusiasts the men who expected success only in obedience to the divine command, with astonishing inconsistency sat down to wait for indefinite signs and tokens. Now we are called to another mode of defence, not, however, neglecting the former. Still the appeal must be to the oracles of God—the only warrant for our expectations—the only rule for our operations. But infidelity has revived, produces in the most popular shape its often repeated sophistries, and demands of us, not only that we should make good our cause as Christians, believing the inspired volume, but that we should establish the validity of our claims upon the support of society—upon independent principles, arising out of the state of the world, and the remedies which we propose to apply to its acknowledged evils, and which they profess to hold in contempt and derision. Even from this challenge we shall not shrink.

I. I must show you that your object and efforts are founded upon the principles and claims of revelation; this will form an exposition of the text.

II. I shall contrast these principles and claims with the infidel pretensions and objections of the day; to these you will be constantly exposed in prosecuting your noble design.

III. I shall press upon your attention the peculiar obligations devolving upon the rising generation, and their incalculable importance to missionary success; this is the great and practical object of the present meeting.

I. I must show you that your object

and efforts are founded upon the principles and claims of revelation.

1. I have spoken of the *principles* of revelation as presenting missionary objects and requiring missionary efforts; and I mean by its principles, that which the term implies,—not an incidental thought, not a collateral circumstance, not an insulated position, not a subordinate intention; but its original postulate; the grand truth which it assumes as essential to the whole system; the great end for which it was given, to which it invariably conducts, in the security of which alone it is consummated.

The plan of salvation has been ever upon this sublime scale from the first promise. If we are to consider the sentence passed against man's seducer in the shape of a serpent, as any thing beyond a legendary tale; if it related at all to the ruin and redemption of the fallen creature, it breathes that spirit of hostility to the powers of darkness, and pity for the human race, which give birth to missionary conceptions and vigour to their execution. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel;" if it imply any thing whatever in relation to this momentous subject, by opposing seed to seed, it subjects all the spiritual enemies of man to the conquering Redeemer, and thus holds out a provision of mercy to the whole human race, without distinction of clime or colour, of name or nation, through that complete victory which he obtained upon Calvary, when he bowed his head, amidst the sympathizing throes of nature, and cried, "It is finished!" The covenant with Abraham, whatever peculiarities were attached to it in reference to his immediate posterity as a people, and their distinction from all others, in its sublime and spiritual import, related to all the world. This is not the time to prosecute the inquiry, in all the bearings of which it is capable, or it would not be difficult to prove, that whatever was peculiar to them was ultimately designed for the universal benefit of man that their election as a people—their separation from all nations—their perfect

dispersion over all countries—and their promised and certain restoration; are all parts of one great plan, which the eternal Providence is carrying on for the consummation of the redemption of the world; that these are obvious links in the golden chain which binds earth to heaven. These might possibly be dismissed as speculations; and to establish their claims to the important rank which they hold in the general system, would require lengthened discussion; but to the simple and comprehensive terms of the promise, in which the covenant is expressed, no reply can be made, and no doubt can be pretended, if words are to be literally understood, and if the authority of the record containing them be admitted, "*In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed:*" this is the first form of the prediction, when he promised him posterity; but when he received his Son from the dead as in a figure, after his faith had laid him upon the altar at the divine command (the very act of obedience itself being the sacrifice of all his human hopes, and the restoration of his child an act of divine goodness) it was told him, "*In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.*" In the same form the covenant is renewed to Isaac, after the death of his father; and this renewal of the covenant to Isaac in the same terms, clearly proves that the promised seed looked beyond himself. To Abraham's posterity at large it could scarcely be imagined to apply, if we expect the position to be borne out by facts. St. Paul has decidedly applied and limited the promise to Jesus Christ, and we rest satisfied with his authority. But, whether or not we consider the interchange of the terms, "*families*" and "*nations*," as implying the domestic influence of Christianity, cherishing in its bosom our home affections, or as explaining the gradual enlargement of its reign from families, until it wins empires, the comprehensive character of its dominions must be admitted when the covenant includes "*all nations*;" and to deny its missionary aspect, is to cramp its genius, to defame its spirit, and to abrogate its engagements, even in their earliest

pledges, under an imperfect and limited dispensation.

Thence arose songs of triumph in the Psalms and in the prophets, which St. Paul has quoted, at once in justification of his own ministry among the Gentiles, and as predictions of the purposes of mercy being carried into effect, in all their boundless provision, finally, among all nations—"Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made to the fathers; and that the *Gentiles* might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the *Gentiles*, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye *Gentiles*, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye *Gentiles*; and laud him, all ye people. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the *Gentiles*, in him shall the *Gentiles* trust."—"Brethren," he adds, "I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the *Gentiles*, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the *Gentile* might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." This beautiful passage contains almost every thing that the scriptural argument demands on the part of missions. Why was he "bold to put them in mind" of the purposes of salvation relative to the Gentile world? because he was writing to Gentiles—the Romans, who could have no claim to the divine promises, had they not been of universal import; and if to them these promises extended, on the same principles, and for the same reasons, they lie open to all nations. This argument ought to weigh the more powerfully with us, because we ourselves, who endeavour to send the tidings of this salvation to others, have received them on the same ground, being Gentiles; and once, before the introduction of Christianity into our highly favoured country, as deeply plunged in idolatry, ignorance, barbarity, and impurity, as the most unenlightened or heathen people to whom we can send

our missionaries. These Gentiles he became the instrument of converting, by "ministering the gospel of God"—the only method adopted by the institution to which you belong. The success is attributed to "the Holy Ghost;" and "acceptance" is evinced by his "sanctifying" influence—*ministering* the gospel of God, "that the offering up of the *Gentiles* might be *acceptable*, being *sanctified* by the *Holy Ghost*." Here are the objects—the means—the end—the presiding power—all introduced. What more can be desired as missionary functions? And if St. Paul found conclusions so irresistible as these, in passages so isolated, and of a character so general, what encouragements may we not derive from larger and more distinct prophecies and promises, confessedly bearing upon the conversion of the heathen world, to which your attention must now be directed, and of which the text is one. The satisfaction which Jesus felt, amidst his dying agonies, arose from the contemplation of this great result—"As many were astonished at him, (his visage was so marred, more than any man, and his form more than the sons of man,) so shall he sprinkle many nations: the kings shall shut their mouths at him; for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard, shall they consider." This prediction is quoted in exact connexion with the apostle's reasoning first recited—"As it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see; and they that have not heard, shall understand;" and he makes it the rule, and the reason of his conduct, "in preaching the gospel, not where Christ was named." But the prophet shall be his own interpreter—"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." What satisfaction can arise out of these agonies, either pleasing to the heart of God, or recompensing the unknown anguish of the sufferer? "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities." And when this sacrifice shall have been made, what shall follow? "The great" and "the strong" shall "be divided" as his "portion," and gathered under the wings of his victory, "as a

spoil;" "the barren" and "the desolate" are to "break forth into singing," and "the Gentiles" are to be "inherited." The gracious influence is to diffuse itself abroad on every side, until the moral and physical world are hushed into undisturbed tranquillity.

These triumphs were anticipated, pledged, and in part manifested at his resurrection. Then he began to associate his inseparable titles. He then proved himself to be "the faithful witness;" he stood manifest, "the first begotten of the dead;" and he began to assert his dignity as "the Prince of the kings of the earth." Sixty years had scarcely elapsed before the conquests of the gospel had so consociated them, that they met upon his glorious head, at whose feet even the beloved disciple fell down as dead; and under their authority, adorned with their majesty, went forth the last revelation which God has made to man. After having shown himself alive forty days by many infallible proofs, he appointed his disciples to meet him at the Mount of Olives. "And Jesus came unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and earth." For what purpose was this delegated authority? and to what end did he apply it? "Go, ye, therefore, and *teach all nations*." In whatever variety of expressions his last charge was given, as recorded by the different evangelists—some more copious than others, but all consonant with themselves—one principle was invariably produced as the sum and substance of their commission: "repentance and remission of sins were to be preached in his name *among all nations*, beginning at Jerusalem;" and that this principle was to be observed by those who, in successive ages, should enter into the labours of these first preachers of Christianity, is clear, from the promise which guarantees its success—"Lo, I am with you *always*; even unto the end of the world." The obligation to exhibit salvation to nations yet unsubdued by the gospel, is therefore as binding to us as it was upon them; since, if any commission to preach the gospel belong to men in the present day, or in any subsequent to that of the apo-

ties, it must be charged with the conditions of the original commission, neither that commission, nor its obligations being any where repealed. If we maintain the perpetuity of the Christian ministry, we must hold it with all its primitive intentions and appointments; and these constitute the very essence of the missionary spirit. In giving them this commission, and pronouncing upon them his blessing, "he was parted from them, and taken up into heaven, and a cloud received him out of their sight." The eye of prophecy followed this glorious flight—"He hath ascended up on high; he hath led captivity captive; he hath received gifts for men; for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." He went to take possession of that dominion, and to exercise that authority of which he spake to his disciples, and the nature of it is here explained. The whole spirit of the passage, and the general structure of the terms, evince that the blessings thus to be distributed, were not to be limited to an action, but were to be universal in their diffusion—the end of our Lord's ascension thus according with that of his resurrection, and both with missionary objects.

We have followed him to his mediatorial throne; he is seated as "King upon his holy hill of Zion;" the "decree" is "declared;" the Messiah is proclaimed: "The Lord hath said unto him, 'Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.'" But he is "*a priest* upon his throne," and still sustains an official character. To him, as such, the promise is made—"Ask of me; I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Hostilities against his empire are supposed and denounced; a rule of judgment, as well as of mercy, is included in his reign; and monarchs are required to pay homage to his sceptre. It were absurd to imagine that this magnificent language could be limited to the affairs and the throne of David, to either his difficulties or his victories. An allusion to these may be fairly admitted; and they are introduced to conduct the believing Jew, under the prophetic spirit, to

"better things than these." To David's troubles or his triumphs—to his enemies or his subjects—to his person or his office—all the parts of this Scripture cannot apply; nor could they to any mere human sovereignty. But an interpretation which would be absurd in the face of it, is rendered absolutely impossible to those who have any reverence for the authority of the Scriptures, or pay any respect to the apostolic exposition of them. We have been accustomed to consider the apostles as endowed with miraculous gifts for the infallible explanation of the Old Testament; and as partakers of the same spirit of prophecy; to us, therefore, the commentary has equal claims to inspiration with the text. The assembled and persecuted disciples, in their memorable prayer, signalized by the accompanying visible symbols of the divine presence and approbation, applied the opening of this psalm to the united hostility of "Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, against the Lord and against his Christ;" thus claiming for Jesus the Messiahship, and applying to the Messiah, and not to David, the prediction, in the very words in which it was uttered. Paul, quoting "*the second psalm*" by title, applies the words, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee," expressly to Jesus, and refers the prediction to the glory of his resurrection; and the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews applies the same words to Jesus, as declaring the peculiar and mysterious nature of his filial relation, and his superiority over angels and all created power. These representations are with us conclusive. We know nothing of those who interpret Scripture by rules of their own invention, or who balance its authority with their own reasons and imaginations; with us it is either true or false, inspired or uninspired, and we cleave to this principle with all its consequences. The text, so explained by the inspired writers themselves, obviously relates to the final and future triumphs of the Messiah. These objects form the substance of his intercession. The work which was finished so far as it could be completed upon

earth, and was declared to be so from the cross, is carrying on in heaven, and is pleaded before the throne. It is the business of the Redeemer—the one great work in which he is engaged, and in which he will be occupied until all the benefits of the salvation which he died to purchase, shall be secured according to the tenor of the covenant declared. This constitutes the basis of his mediatorial kingdom. “He must reign until all enemies are put under his feet.”—“But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, covered with glory and honour.” To his many crowns, must be added that of the regenerated world; and then “cometh the end;” when having subdued all opposition, and “put down all rule, and all authority, and power;” having completed the conquest of the universe, and accomplished his mediatorial commission, he shall “deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him,” and shall mark it by this solemn and public surrender of this delegated sovereignty, no longer necessary to his ransomed and perfected church, and as from the beginning, even from everlasting, the triune Jehovah. “God shall be all in all,” in whose presence the redeemed shall find eternal joy—receiving ever new displays of his love, and ever admiring the glorious mysteries of his ineffable nature.

John foresaw the accomplishment of all those things, when the veil of futurity, and, in some instances, even that of eternity, was drawn aside before him. As though these concurrent declarations had been all too little to give due effect and sufficient assurance to the grand design contemplated in the visions of the Almighty, he beheld him upon whose bosom he once leaned; but so transformed, that all his faculties were overcome, and the splendour of the mount of transfiguration was but a faint shadow of the insufferable brightness of uncreated glory, in which the risen Redeemer then revealed himself to his beloved disciple. Amidst things

hard to be understood, relative to the revolutions of empires and the eventful characters of the closing ages, one object was distinct, the most glorious of all, and to which all the mysterious machinery was subordinated—it was “the word of God,” “clothed with a vesture dipped in blood,” followed by “the armies of heaven,” “smiting the nations with the sword of his mouth;” for this is the weapon by which he achieves his victories, and wearing his triumphant name, besetting his universal empire, and his resistless conquests; “written,” now, to be read another day by the assembled universe—“King of kings, and Lord of lords.” I have now redeemed my pledge, to show you that your *object* to evangelize the world is founded upon the *principles* of revelation; the grand truth which it assumes, and upon which it proceeds, being that to all nations the blessings of salvation are to be ultimately extended; and this truth is held in view from its first to its last page, is represented as originating in eternity before all time, and as consummated in eternity, when time shall cease to be. Here, in point of argument, upon the authority of inspiration, and on the part of those who believe it, the missionary question rests, as to its *object*.

2. But we mentioned the *claims* of revelation, as bearing upon your efforts, in connexion with this unquestionable object. These must be scriptural also, both as to their *extent* and their *means*.

Their *extent* may be measured by the *principles* already established; and revelation *claims* for Christ, empire absolute, religious, universal—“I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.”

The harp of prophecy has been struck from age to age; its strains are too sweet and too elevated to be mistaken for mortal music. It has sounded louder and louder, and its notes have risen higher and higher, until it has mingled with the chorus of heaven; and celestial lyres have been hushed to listen to its melody; angelic spirits have desired to look into the mysteries which it celebrated, and the glories which it foretold. Rising amidst the

mountains of Judea, it reached Greece and Rome, in broken and indistinct echoes; and the strains of Isaiah were imitated by Virgil, who caught them through these imperfect reverberations. The subject of the prophetic song was always the triumphs of the Redeemer. We lay no stress upon particular interpretations of imagery employed by the prophets, whether the renewed face of the earth, and the subdued ferocity of beasts of prey, and the extinction of natural animosities in the animal creation are to be considered as figurative or literal; as relating to an actual transformation of the face of nature, or only to moral changes, or to both, as is not improbable; for all was perfection once, and it is in the power of the Being who works, to restore them; it is not for us to decide. We adhere to the obvious *principle*—the groans of the whole creation must be heard; the promises of God must be fulfilled; the ruins of the fall must be repaired; the Messiah must reign, and his empire is in the bosom; it controls the passions; it is an empire of peace; it thus distinguishes itself from the kingdoms of this world, founded often in violence, supported by cruel and desolating wars, and pouring through their hundred gates armies as destructive in their career as imposing in their external grandeur. It is clear that the spirit of the religious reign of Jesus is "glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will to men." And when such is its spirit, and the moral influence corresponds, and all things shall be subordinated to it, it is easy to conceive, not merely that incalculable benefits shall result to society, but that physical changes, unimaginable in the present state of things, will take place upon the face of nature itself, arising from this moral transformation. We will not, however, suffer ourselves to indulge in speculation, while we contend for the right of empire claimed by revelation for the Saviour.

We enter into no calculations relative to times and to persons, to the years which must revolve, before the latter day, already dawning upon us, shall reach its meridian, or as to which anti-christian powers must fall; and what changes must

be effected before the end shall come! With us, it is always time to obey an express command, always time to labour, the time of duty is clear—"Secret things belong to the Lord our God." The place, the way, the measure, the end of our individual exertions, of our respective destinations, are all with him, and we cheerfully leave them there. We renounce again speculation to grasp certainty—"The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Such is the extent of scriptural claims for Christ, and from you it claims *corresponding duties*. It requires *faith* in these promises, without which your principles will be unfixed, your perseverance uncertain, your labours uncheered, your sacrifices unrewarded. The great part of the courage, zeal, and triumph of primitive Christians was disclosed by the apostle John. "This," said he, "is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." It recommends *prayer*. Even Jesus is to ask—"Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance." Surely it becomes us to follow such an example, and to fill the sails of the vessels which bear our missionaries to foreign shores, with a spiritual gale of unfeigned supplication. "And this is the confidence that we have in him," said an inspired writer, "that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us; and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that are desired of him." We cannot doubt that in praying for missionary success, we ask according to his will, because we ask according to his promise. *Activity* must blend with desire; for "the soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing." This is a service which the young peculiarly may render to the cause of religion; the heart may remain to age, but not the hand; the love to the cause, but not the energy to aid it. "I write to you, young men, because ye are strong," said one over whose head ninety winters had passed, chilling his blood, but unable to freeze his affections. Employment of the *prescribed means* is called for. The wicked one is



to be "consumed with the Spirit of the Lord's mouth, and destroyed with the brightness of his coming." Use no unhallowed weapons, neither force nor fraud, neither philosophical expediency, nor human policy. You do not need them, for the cause rejects them. The weapons which have vanquished so many are powerful enough to subdue all—"and the weapons of our warfare are not carnal." Trust to the simple preaching of the gospel, in faith upon its author: soorners may laugh now, as they did in the days of the apostle, who said, "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them that are saved, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the wisdom of God, and the power of God." *Personal devotedness to God* is required at your hands, and will crown your work. He only who has learned the value of his own soul can justly appreciate the worth of the souls of others. He only who is in earnest for his own salvation can persuade others that he feels a real interest for the salvation of the human race. It is required by the divine law, that a man should love his neighbour as himself, but not more than himself. What opinion, then, can be formed of that man's sincere concern for the conversion of the heathen, who has never inquired after his own? His passions may be touched, but the missionary cause relies only upon principles. These are its claims upon your efforts, and those the indisputable sanctions which the Scriptures afford your object; and here we could be content to rest the cause.

But it will be necessary,

II. To contrast these principles and claims with the infidel pretensions and objections of the day. Necessary, because these will meet you in every step of your Christian and benevolent career—will be urged upon you as oracles of wisdom, and as a new discovery of truth, as though the human mind had received a sudden illumination, and the intellectual and moral world were going to make a new experiment, of the success of which, from the fitness, beauty, and propriety of its principles, no reasonable doubt can be

entertained, as though "they were the people, and wisdom must die with them," and all who venture to differ from their dogmas, to hesitate before they risk eternal interests upon bold speculations and unsupported hypothesis, or to suppose the possibility, and admit the existence of a written revelation of the divine will, were either fools in understanding, enthusiasts by constitution, knaves by design, or, upon the most candid construction, narrow in their conceptions, illiberal in their opinions, irrational in their creed, and unphilosophical in their conclusions. Do not suffer yourselves to be moved by hard names, bitter words, and scornful revilings. Do not mistake sophistry for reason, ridicule for argument, assertions for proof; nor be daunted by the bold assumptions, and the high tone arrogated by the opponents of revelation, and of your efforts as founded upon it. Bring the *pretensions* of both systems to the test; let that test be plain matter of fact, and not doubtful disputation; let the facts be deduced from all parts of the world, and from all ages of time; let them be examined in their uniformity and consistency, and then it will be soon and easily seen and demonstrated who has effected most for the world, in point either of moral culture, or of substantial happiness, the philosopher or the missionary.

*Challenge*, then, their *pretensions*, and produce your own. They tell you of the sufficiency of *natural religion*, and of the deficiency of a written revelation. They tell you, that as all men must be supposed to be interested in a revelation of the divine will, if it be conceded to exist, (and this is at least an admission of the consistency of missionary efforts with the belief of such a revelation,) it ought to have been written with a sunbeam upon all lands, or inscribed on the face of the orb of light himself, that he might daily present it to all nations in his unwearied journey. Upon their own showing, that which is demanded has been done, and (to give them all the advantage of the argument) has been done by natural religion, and not as yet by revelation. If, as they assume, natural religion is a sufficient revelation, and no other is necessary,

it has been written with a sunbeam upon all lands; it has been inscribed from the beginning of the creation upon the face of the glorious orb of day. What is the result? What has natural religion effected in any, in every age? in any, in every country? "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth forth his handy-work;" but "the world by wisdom knew not God;" they "worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator;" they fell down to the hosts of heaven; or "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." Now call for natural religion, and she shall answer you from the depths of the forest and the summits of the mountains; from the sea, and from the shore; from the crowded city, and the uncultivated desert; from the hut of the savage, and the dome of the monarch: every where her altars are planted, and her worship maintained. Her influence and her footsteps may be traced on the face of the whole earth, in barbarous rites, revolting superstitions, and disgusting obscenities; and in all the forms of idolatry, from the feathered gods of the islands of the South-sea, to the misshapen logs of Africa, up to the three hundred and thirty-three thousand of deities of philosophical India. Would you see her in her own person? Bid her come forth—she appears "in garments rolled in blood:" "the battle of the warrior with confused noise" rages around her; children drop into the fires kindled to her honour; human victims are slaughtered on the altars raised to her praise, or crashed beneath the ponderous car upon which she sits enthroned. Around her, dying cries and agonizing shrieks mingle with loud acclamations and frantic songs: her look withers the country, and depopulates the city. This is natural religion, not as she came from the hands of God, the witness of his eternal power and Godhead, but as she is deformed by the passions of men, and debased by their corruptions; not as "the image of the invisible Creator," but as the idol of the fallen and depraved creature. Yet this is natural religion,

stained with gore, and foul with crimes—not depicted by fancy, but demonstrated by fact; by facts drawn from all climes and from all generations; facts which even infidelity has not the effrontery to deny.

But, reason was to have rectified these errors; reason is another goddess of their idolatry; reason was to sit supreme, enshrined in the light of natural religion, the arbitress of human destinies. To her was intrusted the key of knowledge, to unlock and dispense the riches of the universe. She was to be the architect, rearing a structure of happiness and of virtue under which man should repose, and a temple of religion in which he should worship. She was to be the polar star upon which, fixing a steady eye, he might safely sail over the stormy sea of life, and find a port of rest at last. But the light of the star is obscured; the plans of the architect are marred; the key of knowledge is mislaid; the arbitress of man's fate is dethroned. How is it she has lost her high prerogatives, and suffered her authority to be overthrown? She is more than dethroned—she is imprisoned; she not only no longer rules—she is the mere slave of the passions. How is it that she has fallen from her pinnacle of glory? She was beguiled by sense. "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." But when men "became vain in their imaginations, their foolish heart was darkened; and professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."

But, conscience was to have prevented these disorders, and to have laid restraints upon the passions. Conscience was to have ruled as the vicegerent of heaven in the human bosom. Conscience was to have sat as judge upon human actions. Conscience was to have been a witness in all moral questions. Complicated and important was its office, to judge and to witness both, to accuse or excuse, to sentence or acquit, to restrain or to punish. Conscience was to be the sentinel of the soul, keeping guard over the

imprisoned passions. But the judge was corrupted on the bench, and the sentinel slept upon his post. Reason and conscience were either unequal to their charge, or unfaithful to their trust. We can account for these things on the principles of revelation: they are evils which infidelity is too proud to acknowledge, arising out of a doctrine which he detests. Man is a fallen, therefore a depraved creature; and the moral corruption extends over all the faculties of his soul, and has poisoned all the springs of his present being. Therefore his corrupt passions predominate over all his intellectual and moral powers, and hold the noble spirit in ignominious bondage. For this the gospel has provided an effectual remedy; and this remedy you are sending by your missionaries to the ruined world. But infidelity denies the malady so far as possible, and rejects the remedy altogether. He is indeed compelled to allow these moral irregularities.

But, *philosophy* is to counteract them, and to restore the reign of natural religion, of reason, of conscience and of virtue. Were Greece and Rome, then, barbarian? Were they ignorant of philosophy? or was the experiment not made? It was not in a desert, surrounded by savages, but in the centre of Athens, encircled by philosophers, that Paul stood amidst the monuments and upon a mount of idolatry, although a court, and the highest court of justice, evincing how closely allied the civil government was with their debasing superstitions, and pointed to an altar inscribed, "To the unknown God." Such is the true character of every altar which reason and philosophy, and natural religion, unaided by revelation, have raised, although all do not bear the same inscription. These are the altars which your missionaries are hastening to overthrow, to plant the cross in their place, and to proclaim to the poor idolater, "whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare we unto you." And is it not to men like these, the mighty minds of departed ages, who sought after truth, but missed it, because they lacked the guiding ray of revelation; is it not to men like these, that infidels of the present day ap-

peal, acknowledging them as masters, and adopting their system; men, who if they now lived, would be ashamed of their professed scholars? If among such men, natural religion, and reason, and conscience, and philosophy, all proved too unequal a guard against the passions of a corrupt nature, and to a guide absolutely insufficient through the mazes of ignorance to the throne of God; if in such hands the grand experiment altogether failed, what further pretensions have the modern philosophers, the opposers of revelation, and the deriders of missionary efforts, to advance? They will not dare to tell you that it has been denied either time or space: it has been made nearly six thousand years from the fall of man, to the very hour in which I am addressing you; it has been made by the intellectual giants of the olden time, as well as by the infidel pigmies of the age in which we live. They will not dare to tell you, that the results have ever been different from those which we have stated. They will not dare to deny, that such is, at this moment, the aggregate of the experiment now trying, among all states, whether savage or civilized, which revelation has not reached. I disdain to contrast the intellectual and moral influence of Christianity wherever it extends, with the scenes of horror and degradation to which I have alluded; but I demand of your infidel opponents to explain, if they can, by what fatality, or by what chance (and they shall choose their philosophical school in deciding the question) it occurs, that their efforts, to elevate the moral condition of man, have never succeeded, and that those of Christianity have never failed?

You have examined their *pretensions*, and stated your own; now let them produce their strong reasons, and you shall fearlessly face the *objections* which they commonly bring against your object and your efforts.

They tell you that *the world ought not to be disturbed*: that is, that the usurpations of sin and of sorrow, which have been permitted during thousands of years, should be established by prescription, and that a revolted universe should never

be summoned to return to the mercy and the sceptre of its lawful sovereign. Tell them that you are not the troublers of nations; but that their contentions and wrongs arise from the lusts which they cherish, and which you are anxious to remove. Tell them that which may silence their apprehensions as to the issue. It is only to look at the world as it is; worse it cannot be made; better it may be. But who can look at the world as it is, lying in wickedness, and broken with sorrow, without a relenting heart and a melting eye? without looking up to the Father of the family of man, and praying, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is heaven," and without calling into exercise all the exertions which the expressed desire demands?

They tell you that *your resources are inadequate*; the means which you possess are not proportionate to the end which you contemplate. Reply to them, that you do not proceed upon human calculations; that this departure from the ordinary rule arises not from fanaticism, but because the rule does not apply to an ordinary subject; the cause is not your own, and the success is not your own; that you use the means prescribed by him whose interests you labour to advance, and that you cheerfully leave the result with him. Show them that by these despised and confessedly disproportionate means the triumphs of Christianity have been hitherto secured; and that what has been effected is a sufficient guarantee for whatever remains to be done. Your external means are, indeed, limited; but your hidden resources are eternal and inexhaustible.

They say that *yours is the wild dream and the contemptible effort of fanaticism*. Before they venture to pronounce upon your pretensions, they ought to blush for the practical defect of their own in every age. Point them to the desolated temples of superstition and cruelty; to the forsaken altars, where human blood flowed; to the abolished and infamous rites of heathen worship, and tell them, that while philosophy denounced these, it could not remove them; it could not stay the effusion of innocent blood, nor cleanse the polluted

shrine, any more than change the heart of the worshipper. But Christianity has effected this, and it has been done by the very means which they despise: that which they presumptuously called "the foolishness of preaching," has proved the power of God. The scorn and derision turn upon their own heads; for "the foolishness of God is wiser than man; and the weakness of God is stronger than man."

They assert that *our designs are sinister, our own efforts injurious*. We have heaven and earth to refute the falsehood. Heaven, in the sanction which it has given to the efforts—earth in the benefit which it has received from them. To so foul a calumny it would be a degradation to make any other answer than to appeal to the principles which we inculcate, and to point to the effects which they produce. They require no defence—they speak for themselves.

When, having exhausted all other objections, they conclude that *the thing is impossible*, there are two clear answers to such an assumption. It is *presumptuous*, as it regards the Being whose work it is. It is, indeed, impossible with man; and their own vain labours sufficiently establish it—but not with God; "for with God all things are possible." It is *irrational*; for Reason replies, that what has been done, may be done again; and the history of the church in all ages, the state of our own country, nay, our own hopes and principles, establish the possibility of that moral change which Christianity effects upon human nature, and the certainty of its success. Such are the objections which the opponents of revelation usually bring against missionary objects and efforts, and you perceive of how small weight they are when laid in the balance of truth.

III. And lastly, I detain you a few moments longer to press upon your attention the peculiar obligations devolving upon the rising generation, and their incalculable importance to missionary success. The application of these obvious principles must be left to yourselves.

All the obligations generally stated, are *peculiarly pressed upon you*. When the

prophetic eye of the psalmist beheld the expiring Saviour upon the cross, distinguished the manner of his death, and its cruel circumstances, saw the soldiers dividing his garments and casting lots for his vesture, heard the insulting taunts of the priests and of the multitude, and even his own dying complaint of desertion, he anticipated also the glorious results of this sacrifice, and the universal empire which should arise out of it. Then his eyes were turned upon the importance of the rising generation in connexion with the extension of his cause. As to the result, he said, "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee: for the kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the governor among the nations." As to the means, and the especial influence of the young, he added, "A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this,"

*You possess advantages superior to those who preceded you.* "Other men laboured, and ye have entered into their labours." So said Jesus when he pointed out to his disciples fields white unto the harvest, which patriarchs had ploughed, prophets sowed, and martyrs watered with their blood. "I sent you to reap that upon which ye bestowed no labour." This, my young friends, is your position; and this is your advantage. If the toil devolves upon you, so does the experience of those who went before you in this arduous enterprise. They sounded the alarm in the ears of a slumbering world: let the awakened nations now wait to receive your testimony. Besides which, when personal labours abroad cannot be rendered, your prosperity, your talents, your influence at home, may all be beneficially employed. The harvest of the world is ripe; the ingathering belongs to you, and to those who shall follow you. The present generation has sown in tears, although not altogether so; the future generation shall reap with unmingled joy.

*There is peculiar beauty and fitness in*

*your early consecration to the cause of religion.* You are now in the spring of your age, in the flower of your beauty; devote yourselves to that Saviour, for it is he who calls; who clothed you with grace, and girded you with strength; who gave symmetry to the frame, and intelligence to the understanding; his hand fashioned you, his Spirit inspires you; he died to raise the body which must soon decay to immortality; to renovate the faculties of the spirit which will become incumbered by the infirmities of its frail tabernacle, in a state fitted to their grandeur; to redeem the soul from destruction, and to give expansion to all its intellectual grasp in eternity. Come, and dedicate the first-fruits of your existence to him, who will ripen it into everlasting glory.

*The voice of nature sanctions the demands of religion.* Your fathers are passing away—the sacred phalanx that once stood so firm is broken—the ranks that occupied the front of the battle are thinned—the fragment of a clay remains alone to the veterans who yet keep the field. They called upon you to fill the vacant spaces; upon you, noble youths, to be baptized for the dead; upon you to receive the colours of the cross from their dying hand; upon you to stand last amidst the shock of battle, while the trumpet that blows an onset for you, sounds the signal of retreat for them. Buckle on your armour, and take courage by their example, who die with their harness on, and when they fall, write, "I have conquered," upon their shield. It was thus that Paul the aged encouraged the youthful Timothy—"Watch thou in all things, endure affliction, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing."

*The hopes of the world are fixed upon you; and the cries of hundreds of millions of immortal spirits poured in upon your*

ear. These hopes are cherished, and these cries are raised, with a confidence corresponding with the promise of your years. Age may be dull, and grow indolent; but youth is active, and cannot excuse itself from employment. Avarice is cruel, and is sometimes thought to be the vice of age; but youth is generous, and for you to be covetous would be unnatural; to be parsimonious in such a cause would be criminal. Spare nothing; time, property, talent, influence, labour, prayer; bring all, and lay it upon the altar which "sanctifieth both the gift and the giver;" and before which eventually "every knee shall bow."

*You must succeed.* It is possible that discouragements will arise; it is certain that difficulties must be encountered; it is probable that disappointments may be felt. Fear none of these things; you may be compelled to retreat; you can never be conquered. If the magnanimity of a senate could thank a vanquished general because he did not despair of his country—what cowardice is ours, fighting under the banner of a captain always victorious, if we should faint, because the battle waxes hot, or the advantage seems to balance for a moment between the contending hosts, or the campaign is prolonged beyond our expectations. To the timid pilot who was afraid to launch into the deep at the bidding of Cæsar, when a frightful tempest raged—"Fear nothing," said the hero, "you carry Cæsar and his fortunes." And you who are embarked in the missionary cause, carry in your vessel, not Jesus and his fortunes, for with him nothing is contingent; but Jesus and his interests, interests so dear to him that he died to secure them; and he who sails with you can rebuke the tempest, and instantly there shall be a great calm. Does the lapse of time effect you? It is true, "one generation passeth away, and another generation

cometh." You are about to occupy the place of your fathers, and your children will hereafter occupy yours. Do the ravages of death appal you? It is true, ministers and missionaries are not immortal, but their cause is: its friends are like the foam of the billows which the tempests scatter; but it resembles the eternal flow of the ocean, rolling its fullness upon the most distant shores.

O ye heroic spirits, who have met death in all its forms; by fire or the wave, by famine or the sword, by climate or oppression, from the beginning of the creation to this hour,—who have stood firm amidst all danger, undismayed by persecution, unterrified by your adversaries,—spirits of martyred missionaries, who in all ages have suffered for the truth as it is in Jesus; from righteous Abel down to blameless Smith; if ye could attend our call, we would summon you here to tell those young champions for the cause for which you expired, from what fountains ye drew your resources, and what rewards now recompense your labours. But it cannot be; you rest from your toils, and even the cause of religion must not interrupt your repose. To thee, then, holy and eternal Spirit, by whom these were what they were, we appeal; thou art ever present; may a double portion of those influences by which thou didst honour them, rest upon those young and ardent minds, devoted in their respective stations, and in their day, to the same service, and upon the generations that shall follow them, until all shall be consummated; until the Saviour shall appear the second time, without a sin-offering, unto salvation; and when he shall rise from his throne of judgment, the shouts of the myriads of the redeemed shall overpower the thunders which destroy the material universe. Amen.

## THE PULPIT GALLERY,

NO. XIII.

THE REV. WM. BENGO COLLYER, D. D.

"I venerate the man whose heart is warm,  
Whose hands are pure, whose doctrine and  
whose life  
Coincident, exhibit lucid proof  
That he is honest in the sacred cause."

COWPER.

THERE are few men who have obtained a greater degree of celebrity, or who have exercised a more powerful influence upon others, than the Reverend Doctor Collyer. His name has always been able to attract a numerous congregation, and for a long series of years his labours have been deservedly honoured by the Christian world. He is one of the few who have been able to withstand the seductions of popular applause, and to keep on the even tenor of his way, notwithstanding the flattery of friends. And few have been so much exposed to the temptation of vanity. Praised alike by the learned and ignorant, by wealth and fashion, by royal and noble friends, it is a sure proof of his genuine piety, that amidst such libations he has continued humble.

With all sects of true Christians, the doctor appears to be on terms of cordiality and friendship.—The bishops and clergy of the Established Church, his own and other denominations, equally venerate his character, and applaud his published labours. The list of subscribers to his lectures proves his acquaintance with the religious, political, and literary world; and names are found there which it is honourable to mention. This at least shows that his merit is sterling, that his piety is sincere, and that his works are valued.

As an author, although he cannot claim the palm of originality, yet his researches—his various learning—his accumulation of interesting facts—his presenting old and familiar truths in a new and striking manner, entitle him to rank high as a theological writer. His style is remark-

ably elegant and polished, and there is a rich vein of evangelical piety running through all his works.

As a preacher, he is admired for the varied excellencies of his discourses. They are equally removed from vulgar cant and high flown mysticism.—His voice is soft and melodious, and his action remarkably elegant. The tender and pathetic are his forte.

With a mind stored with classical learning, and a good memory, perfect self-possession, and a knowledge of Scripture language, he illustrates his subjects with such an easiness of manner as to awaken curiosity and secure attention: neither art nor labour is visible in his pulpit exercises. Like Jeremy Taylor, he does not confine himself to a dry exposition of a text, but ranges over all nature and art for new and striking images, and this is done without affectation,—so that the poorest and most illiterate can understand him, and the learned cannot be offended.

Occasionally, he ascends to the dignity of argument and expostulation, and his language then becomes bold and animated, and his manner ardent and impassioned.—His eloquence is like that of the school which immediately succeeded the orations of Cicero,—correct, polished, elegant,—where, if there was little to offend the taste, there was still less to call for the vehement emotions of mighty passions, struggling to embody in action the various duties which the orator enforced upon the people. Yet this may be imputed more to the taste of the age than to the fault of the preacher.

The theology of the Doctor is drawn from the Bible; and to that sacred source he on all occasions appeals for the truth of his statements. He does not, however, despise the aid of learned men, but, where their sentiments are in unison with truth, he readily adopts them. This gives greater variety to his preaching. He is most at home when dwelling upon the consolations of religion; here, indeed, his talents shine forth, and the poor and wounded in spirit are refreshed under his ministrations. When detailing the love of our Saviour, when he exhibits his suf-

ferings and death to accomplish our salvation, he triumphs over the coldness of scepticism and unbelief, and warms the heart with pious emotion.

The Doctor's life has been one of devotion to the cause of God and man: his great popularity as a public teacher has always kept in full exercise his pulpit talents, and the press bears testimony to his unwearied exertions to promote true religion. Besides his seven volumes of lectures, which contain many new and ingenious arguments in support of Christianity—a vast storehouse of curious and interesting facts—he has published a great many single sermons, and other useful works, all tending to increase and multiply the disciples of Jesus.

The following is a specimen of his style, from the last volume of his Lectures: he is speaking of the progress of the gospel. "The beginnings were miraculous, but the close shall be inconceivable. Who, that had seen the little band of brothers issuing from their upper chamber, in all the simplicity of their character, unarmed, unpatronized, could have imagined that the throne of the Cæsars should feel their power, and veil its glory before them; and that the stupendous structure of paganism, reared by philosophy, cemented by habit, and upon which state policy had built its power and authority, should vanish like a morning cloud as they advanced? Yet so it was, so went forth the word of salvation, as the day breaks—its first beam distinguishing itself, by its purity, from the lamp of reason and the torch of philosophy; but wherever it poured its meridian splendour,

eclipsing all light in its surpassing radiance. So it grew as the mustard seed, 'which indeed is the smallest of all seeds;' but when its maturity shall have come, 'not the birds of the air,' but all nations of the earth shall find repose under its shadow. So it rose as the fountain rises,—a spring of living water gushing forth; but now it is a 'river, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God;' and in the fulness of time, its healing waters shall flow over all the kingdoms of the world. Its voice is more powerful than the thunder, to which science can easily point out the bounds assigned; and it is softer than the gale of the summer's evening: it would seem as though the universe were constructed to convey its sound into all lands: it was whispered in the east, and rolled round to the west—it is repeated in the west, and rolls back to the east. It is gentle as the spring shower, and as fructifying—the wilderness and the solitary place is glad because of it, and the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose.'—It is all-embracing, vivifying, enlightening, supplying, controlling, as the sun; but the sun has his period, and 'shall sleep in the clouds forgetful of the voice of the morning.' But, we repeat, what shall the end be? It is all-glorious and eternal as the heaven to which it leads—where there is no night—for 'the Lord God and the Lamb are the light of it;' where 'the nations of the redeemed shall walk;' and they shall reign with the Redeemer for ever and ever. Amen."



## SERMON XLIV.

### THE FULNESS OF TIME.

BY THE REV. ROBERT PHILIP,

MARBLEY CHAPEL, KINGSLAND.

*"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."*  
—Gal. iv. 4, 5.

You remember, and it is a very pleasing recollection, that the first promise of a Saviour was given under the very tree where our first parents sinned and fell. And, when you consider that four thousand years elapsed between the giving of the promise and its fulfilment, the question can hardly escape being asked, why was the promise so long being fulfilled? Why was Christ born at so late a period of the world? Why was Christianity not introduced sooner? Infidels have often said, with a sneer, "If Christianity is so valuable, why was the world without it so long? Why were four thousand years allowed to pass away without its introduction?" Now, when you hear this objection started, you may say in reply, Christianity came thus late into the world, *in order that infidels might have no excuse for their unbelief.* The Son of God came no sooner, because men were not before qualified to examine his claims, or to judge of his pretensions. God delayed the blessing till the world was fitted, by its population, and by its general state, to receive Christianity. It will tend to illustrate this fact if we consider more particularly what we have just stated. Let us, therefore,

I. CONSIDER THE WISDOM AND PROPRIETY OF DELAYING THE FULFILMENT OF THE PROMISE OF CHRIST UNTIL WHAT PAUL HERE CALLS "THE FULNESS OF TIME."

He intimates that there was the same propriety in delaying this, as there is in not allowing a minor to possess the property of an heir. Now, I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world; "*but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*" Intimating that at any earlier period it would have been as unwise to have sent his Son into the world, as to make any young man master of his own property till he came of age. Let us consider this subject.

1. *At no period before "the fulness of time" would the incarnation of Christ have been so proper, all things considered.* So far as it regarded the redemption of the soul by his blood, the coming of Christ could neither be too soon nor too late; the blood of Christ would have been a sufficient atonement, whether shed at the beginning or at the end of the world. The virtue of that atonement depends on his divinity, and could not have less efficacy, be presented when it would. But considering the coming of Christ as a whole, taking into account his doctrines,

his life, his miracles, and so on, it would have been untimely at an earlier period.

It would have been untimely, *during the antediluvian age*, or at the time of the flood; because there was no man then living able to have written an account of it, or to have written so as to have interested all ages of the world. Even Noah could not have benefited mankind in this respect, as a writer. If he had written to suit us, it would not have benefited the men of his age; and if he had written so as to suit them, it would have been of no use to us. But by not appearing in the world till civilization and letters had spread to a very considerable extent, the facts were all carefully examined and recorded; and the New Testament is made to stand out beyond all other writings.

The period *from the flood to the time of Moses* would not have been so suitable; because then the world's population was comparatively small, and, for the most part, uncivilized. It would have been unwise to have sent the world's Saviour when there were but few to see him, and but few to appreciate him. We say, of a man of great genius, who resides in an obscure village, or immures himself in solitude, what a pity it is that he is placed in a situation where his talents are buried—where there are none to appreciate his excellencies! And when we consider the sublime doctrines; the salutary precepts; the beneficial example; the propitious miracles; the whole life of the Son of God, we may well say, it would have been a pity they should have been given sooner, when they were intended to suit the whole population of the civilized world.

The time *from Moses to the Prophets* would have been too soon. Then the Jews were not sufficiently familiar with the grounds of the great salvation. They understood them, indeed, but very imperfectly at the time Christ came: how much more imperfectly would they have understood them when they were just come raw out of the bondage of Egypt, with all the associations which their minds had formed in that land of gross idolatry. It was wise—it was kind, that Christ came

not in those dark ages. O, how would infidelity have scoffed and triumphed, if Christ *had* made his appearance then! Infidels would have said that he made his appearance *purposely* at a time when the world was peopled by barbarians—by weak, ignorant, credulous men! His coming, therefore, was reserved for the great Augustan age.

The period of *four great monarchies* would have been equally unfit for the coming of Christ. War was then so much the trade, and dominion, and rule, so much the passion of men, that the religion of Christ would not have gained the public attention; or, if it had, infidels would have said that Christianity was the invention of the Nimrods, the Nebuchadnezzars, and other tyrants of the day;—a mere political scheme to bring the people into their own power, and to suit the views of despotic governments. But to place the church beyond the reach of their shafts of ridicule and scorn, God delayed the coming of his Son to the chief period of peace, of civilization, of philosophy, that was ever known in this our world.

And if you have not turned your attention to this subject, and considered why four thousand years were suffered to pass away before the Saviour appeared, I would remind you that *the people of God were not really losers by the delay*. They had not the same degree of light that subsequent ages were blessed with; but they had the same unqualified promise that whoever looked to the Lamb of God who was to be slain, should be saved. They were assured, that when the Messiah should come, he would make ample atonement for the sins which had been committed under the first covenant; and that all who believed should have the full benefit. And hence the apostle says, in the eighth chapter of his epistle to the Romans, what applies, not only to us, but more especially to those who had lived before his coming, the history of whose experience it may be said to record:—"Whom he did foreknow, he also *did* predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called;

and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Now, though this applies to the state of believers in the present age, it is, in fact, *the history* of the conduct of God towards the ancient believers. So that they were no losers by the delay of Christ's incarnation; they were pardoned and renewed, and finally admitted into heaven, upon trust or sufferance. Hence the writer to the Hebrews intimates that Christ had to make atonement for the sins of the first covenant, that they might be ratified in the state into which they had entered, on the ground of faith in him who was to come in due time.

2. *The Augustan age* (the period in which Cæsar Augustus lived, known in history as the Augustan age) was emphatically "*the fulness of time*;" and, of all periods, the best of time for introducing Christ and his system.

1st. The world was then prepared thoroughly to examine the claims of Christ. Both Jews and Gentiles were then qualified to detect an impostor, if Christ had been an impostor. They had political motives to urge them to this. The Jews were under the Roman power, and had not another hope of deliverance but from their Messiah. He was as a star in their horizon; and they were prepared with the greatest nicety to scrutinize his claims. On the other hand, the Roman government was very jealous of losing any portion of its power; and they also would scrutinize the claims of Christ, till they saw clearly that his kingdom was "not of this world." The literary character of that age also led them minutely to scrutinize his claims. The celebrated philosopher, Cicero, had previously introduced the system of argumentation which doubted and disputed all it met with; and would admit nothing without proof. If Bolingbroke, and Voltaire, and Hume, and Gibbon, had lived then, they could not have brought greater talent into the field than then existed. Christianity then threw down the gauntlet, and boldly dared philosophy to investigate her claims. "These things were not done in a corner." The claims of the

religion of Christ were submitted to the first scrutiny the world ever saw; and it is passing strange, that the puny wits of our day should stagger the opinion of any man, when the brightest geniuses of which Roman philosophy could boast, were not able to shake the system they attacked! The religious state of the world, also, enabled men to make such a scrutiny. If you read the Eclogues of Virgil, and examine them with the prophecies of Isaiah before you, you will find the representations of the poet to be almost verbatim with the language of the prophet. And the writers of that age were well able to do so:—for Ptolemy Philadelphus had been careful to secure translations of all the principal Hebrew writings; and the learned were all able to have access to them. Hence the Jews so often cavilled about our Saviour; they saw so many marks of Messiahship in him, that they sometimes said, "Tell us who thou art;"—"If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly;"—"Art thou the Christ, the Son of God?" My brethren, these are not questions to be settled in the present century; they were settled—completely settled, in the first centuries; and though the enemies of Christianity had all their emperors and philosophers to put it down, they were not able to put it down for a moment! O, let us not be robbed of our confidence, or startled by the objections and sarcasms of vain and foolish men. Paul has stated, in the text, that it was "*the fulness of the time*" when Christ appeared. The collision of systems, and of politicians, and disputants, have only rubbed the diadem into brightness; and we are not about to surrender its glories to any of the puny scoffers of our day!

2d. The world was then fully able to appreciate the doctrines of Christ by comparison and by contrast. They might not be able to appreciate them *spiritually*; but they could do so by comparison and by contrast. Infidelity says, why did not Christ come sooner? Had he come a century sooner, philosophy would have contended that she had entire empire over men. In the wisdom of God she was allowed to try her strength; and she was at length compelled to hide her head in her own

shade, when Christ came, and said, "I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE." At the time Christ came, the doctrine of immortality was expunged from their creed, and the practice of suicide had become most popular. But though philosophy could blot the doctrine of immortality from the creed, it could not root its idea out of the human mind. Life was too dear, and the love of life was too ardent, to be readily given up; and at the precise period when immortality was so longed for, and men were sick of the doctrine of annihilation, Christ came, and "brought life and immortality to light." This hope of the heart became one of the strongest motives to induce men to embrace Christianity. At that period, too, the doctrine of *sacrifices* was fully understood. They had, indeed, began to decline in the Jewish temples, but they were taken up with eagerness by the heathen. At the time that Christ came, the doctrine of vicarious sacrifices was most popular, and the offering of those sacrifices at its highest pitch. The altars of Jupiter blazed incessantly—but they blazed in vain: those who offered them found that "the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin." And at the precise period when sacrificers became tired of their round of offerings, at the very moment when hope was about to give up the ghost, Christ came "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Yes; at this solemn crisis, when philosophy failed to teach men the way of happiness, and the sacrifices which had so long been confided in were about to be put away, then Christ came to teach men the way of life and salvation, and then was his blood shed to ransom men by thousands and by millions.

3. *The Augustan age was the best for the revelation of Christ and his gospel, because then the world was prepared for the extension of Christianity.* Had Christ come into our world sooner, Christianity could not have been so well propagated. We know, from our own experience and observation, something of the truth of this. Our Bible and Missionary Societies were not formed till our commerce had linked this nation with all the nations

of the world. And thus God did not send his gospel till the world was properly prepared for its reception and diffusion. Little did the Romans think, when they were forming their Appian ways, and opening their new roads, that they were forming and opening paths for the feet of the gospel to track its way over the known world! Little did they think, when they reduced their language to rule, that that language should be the means of defrauding their own temples, and of dethroning their own gods! But so it was; and there was no period *but that* when it could have been introduced so suitably. Hence, Paul says, "*When the fulness of the time was come*, God sent his Son." These are only hints on this interesting subject; but they may tend to throw some light on a very important question in reference to Christianity, and they may tend to furnish the minds of the young with an answer to those infidels who ask, sometimes, with a triumphant sneer, "Why was it that Christ came so late into the world!" If you are asked this question, my young friends, turn round to the man who asks you, and say, "Just that you, sir, might have no excuse. Mightier geniuses than you have examined into the claims of Christ and Christianity; and that at the very time when it was proper to do so—when they had all the facts and circumstances of the case before their eyes." Thus the wisdom and goodness of God ordained it, that our system might have firm footing, and that our hopes might have a stable foundation. Let us,

## II. CONSIDER THE MANNER OF HIS INCARNATION.

"When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law."

1. "God sent forth his Son, *made of a woman*." There is something very peculiar in this expression, "*made of a woman*;" it is generally said "*born of a woman*;" it is only in reference to Christ that the word "*made*" is used. The fact is, that the words would have been an absurdity, had Christ been the son of Joseph. The language agrees with nothing in nature, because the fact of which it

speaks is out of nature, is altogether a *miracle*. The expression will not apply to any other but Christ. On the same principle it was said, "the word was *made flesh*;" what would you think if I were called to baptize a child, and were solemnly to thank God that the child was "made of a woman," or that it was "made flesh?" You would consider it a strange mode of expression, and would naturally say, "Why what else could it be made of?" But we must not dwell on this point.

There is something peculiarly striking in the fact, that "God sent forth his Son" into the world as a *child*. To me there is something very delightful in the idea that the Saviour was first presented as an *infant* in our world. Why it proves at once that his errand was one of mercy: it is an affecting illustration of what is said in the gospel, "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world," else he would have come as a man of war, arrayed in all the attributes of power and of terror. But he came as a babe; and this was permitted, that you and I, who are *parents*, might feel as much comfort and delight in his nativity, as when we folded our own first dear infant in our arms. God has thus given a pledge in the very sweetness of his infancy, how blessed his errand to the world was!

He sent him also *in humble life*. It was said to the shepherds, "Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger;" and in similar circumstances of poverty we find his whole life. And why? Why to show that the poorest and humblest are welcome to him, and to all his benefits. Had he been born in a palace; had he dwelt among the rich and great; the poor might have feared to approach him. But he took the lowest scale in society, that the humblest, the poorest, the most dependent might not fear rejection when they came to him. Hence, he sent the plainest, the simplest, the most unlettered men, to see and to worship him at his advent; though he sent also, some great and wise on the same errand. This teaches us that while there are mysteries in the incarnation of the Son of God, which angels cannot

comprehend, there are yet in it features of grace and glory which the simplest may understand. Angels sang on their visit to Bethlehem, and the mysteries of the incarnation did not prevent their song; and shepherds did so too, and its mysteries did not prevent *their song*.

2. He was "*made under the law*." That is, he was made in the same relation to the law, which we as sinners stand to it—bound to obey it, and also to bear its curse. This Christ did;—he "magnified the law" by his perfect obedience, and he "made it honourable" by bearing its curse, and preventing it from being a curse to us.

### III. CONSIDER THE GREAT DESIGN OF HIS INCARNATION.

This was two-fold:—"to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

1. "*To redeem them that were under the law*." "To redeem them" from what? My friends, from the *curse* of the law, and not from the *obligation* of it. The death of Christ would not have been an atonement, if it had set aside the law as a rule of life; this would have disgraced and destroyed the law, instead of magnifying and making it honourable. The death of Christ has made the law a rule for our working, and has abolished it as a covenant of works. We are not redeemed from the curse of the law, if we reject the obligation of the law. That man has not faith, whatever he pretends to, who makes void the law:—that faith is not the "faith of God's elect," if it make void the law of Christ; and while a man pretends to do the will of Christ, if I hear him deny the authority of the law, and declare that he has nothing to do with it, I turn at once from him to the apostle of the Lamb, and he says, "Do we make void the law, through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law;" and then I know which side to choose.

But all are not redeemed from the *curse* of the law who acknowledge the obligation of the law. If there be a man here who tries to obtain redemption from the gospel, by obedience to the law, that man understands neither law nor gospel. My fellow sinner, if you are concerned about

salvation, a justifying righteousness is your object. Now "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" and relief to your mind you cannot feel, unless you go to him for justification before God. You cannot obey the law too much; but you must look for justification to Christ alone.

2. "*That we might receive the adoption of sons.*" Mark the peculiarity of the language; not the adoption of *nations*. The Jews had this for a long series of ages; "*to them pertained the adoption, the promises,*" and so on. But this left them, at any moment, liable to be cut off. No; he says, "*the adoption of sons,*" that we might be part of the divine family, and have an interest in all its blessings. I cannot now dwell on this interesting point; but I would say, in one word, *they* are of the children of God, of the adopted of God, who have fled to Christ for complete redemption. I know well, by experience, how many agitations a serious mind feels after it becomes acquainted with the gospel. Often is it said, "Ah, I have not the spirit of adoption! I am not able to say, Abba, Father! I have been earnestly looking and groaning for this spirit; but I have not yet felt that which warrants me to say, *I am a child of God!*" I am sure those who have felt such emotions know how great is the anxiety connected with them. Now when you and I are set fast here, it arises from an oversight:—the fact is, we cannot *feel* it till we *believe* it. The word of God says that *he* is a child of God who has fled for refuge to Christ alone. If we believe this, then we are warranted to believe that great statement, that "to as many as believe on him, to them gave he power, or warrant, to become the sons of God;" and it is not by looking beyond the word of God for something to satisfy us, but by taking the divine testimony as it stands, that we are to expect comfort. If I know in my conscience that I need salvation, the salvation that is to be found in Christ alone, and depend on him alone for that salvation, I am warranted to believe that I am a child of God; and I may spend my life in looking for it elsewhere. It is in

the Bible, and not *out* of it, that we are to look for our warrant. It is in the word of God we are to search for it; and if we find that warrant there, we have a right to believe that we are children of God; and then we come to enjoy it, and then we are truly happy.

## THE PULPIT GALLERY.

NO. XIV.

REV. ROBERT PHILIP,

*Maberley Chapel, Kingsland*

THE REV. ROBERT PHILIP was formerly minister of an Independent congregation at Liverpool, at which place he resided many years, and taught the people with success. What circumstances occasioned his removal to London, and settlement at Kingsland, we do not know.

Mr. Philip in person is rather tall, and inclined to corpulency. His face is pleasing, his forehead high, and denoting imaginative power; his voice is weak, and rather shrill in its tones; his action is in general appropriate.

As a preacher, Mr. Philip is distinguished by his bold and energetic proclamation of what he conceives to be the truth. He appears neither solicitous to ascertain whether his doctrine be palatable to his hearers, nor does he study nice and delicate terms to convey the awful denunciations of the gospel to the tender consciences of well-bred sinners. He clothes himself in the dignity of his office, and speaks as one having authority, and not as the scribes. He evidently studies divine truth for himself, and examines "systems of divinity" by the unerring standard of holy writ. He does not seem to be one who would tolerate error because of its antiquity, or because it has been sanctioned and approved by eminent divines.

His imagination is powerful;—hence his language is figurative, and his sermons abound with vivid and interesting pictures. His judgment is good, and his taste has evidently been improved by

observation and reading. He appears well acquainted with the human heart, not only as it is delineated and exposed in the Scriptures, but as it is seen in the development of its affections in society. This gives him experience to detect its latent wishes, and to counteract its evil propensities, by substituting high and noble motives to action, instead of low and worldly cares.

His ideas are sometimes very original, and his whole discourses very far removed from the tame generalities of common-place preachers. Viewed in this respect, he is certainly entitled to rank high amongst his contemporaries.

The following is a specimen of his style, selected from his sermon on the death of the lamented princess Charlotte:—

“Aware, as I was, how the doleful tidings must affect a devoted and intelligent people, still I could not have conceived that any thing short of a universal earthquake, or the blast of the archangel’s trumpet, would have produced the gloom and consternation which now surround us. And who that contemplated Britain the week before this calamity, and saw her vast population labouring in their respective spheres of action, as if nothing could divert them from gain or gayety—as if every individual felt only for himself; who that saw this could have named any event, not miraculous, which, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, would banish mirth from all the gay, and composure from all the serene; make the merchant lay down his pen, and the mechanic his tools; unrobe the bride of her ornaments, and the bridegroom of his attire; turn the house of feasting into a house of mourning; and command a pause to pleasure and business, like the shaking among the dry bones in the valley of vision! Such a shock was inconceivable from natural impulse. Sleep departed from the fatigued and the thoughtless for a time; honour and wealth seemed to be insipid; the orphan forgot his exposure, the widow her desolation, and the widower the ‘wife of his youth,’ in

the more aggravated woes of Claremont; and, by an instantaneous movement, the whole community seemed to discover that their personal comfort had been suspended on the princess. ‘One dead’ in every family could not have excited more general consternation.”

#### THE MISSIONARY CANDIDATE.—AN ANECDOTE.

A PIOUS young man, who was desirous of devoting himself to the work of the ministry among the heathen, and had been recommended with that view to the Committee of the London Missionary Society, on undergoing the usual examination, stated that he had one difficulty: he had an aged *mother* entirely dependent upon an elder brother and himself for maintenance; and, in case of that brother’s death, he should wish to be at liberty to return to this country, if his mother were still living, to contribute to her support. Scarcely had he made this ingenuous statement, when a harsh voice exclaimed, “If you love your mother more than the Lord Jesus Christ, you will not do for us.” Abashed and confounded, the young man was silent. Some murmurs escaped the committee; and he was directed to retire while his proposal was taken into consideration. On his being again sent for, the venerable chairman, (Dr. Waugh,) in tones of unaffected kindness, and with a patriarchal benignity of mien, acquainted him that the committee did not feel themselves authorized to accept of his services on a condition involving uncertainty as to the term; but immediately added, “We think none the worse of you, my good lad, for your dutiful regard to your aged parent. You are but acting in conformity to the example of Him whose gospel you wish to proclaim among the heathen; who, as he hung upon the cross in dying agonies, beholding his mother and the beloved disciple standing by, said to the one, ‘Woman, behold thy son;’ and to John, ‘Behold thy mother.’ My good lad, we think none the worse of you.”

## SERMON XLV.

### THE CAUSE AND CHARACTER OF RELIGIOUS JOY.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM BROWN.

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*"And he went on his way rejoicing."*—Acts viii. 39.

In the preceding context we are presented with some brief notices concerning the distinguished individual to whom these words refer. We are presented more particularly with an account of his conversion to God, an account which, though very short, must, I should think, be deeply interesting to every Christian. Attached as a proselyte to the Jewish church, he had travelled, it should seem, no less a distance than from Ethiopia to Jerusalem, for the purpose of worshipping God within that church's consecrated veil, and according to her appointed ritual. The object of his journey being thus accomplished, he was now on his return, it appears, to the court of Candace, the queen of his native land, to whom he acted in the capacity of chamberlain or treasurer; and while prosecuting his homeward way, we find he was profitably employed in perusing the Old Testament Scriptures. The Bible, we learn, was opened before him in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah; but to him, in his circumstances at that time, it was a dead letter and a sealed book. That impressive prophecy respecting our Redeemer's sufferings was read by him with little understanding and with little emotion; it might, perhaps, be somewhat interesting to his natural feelings, indeed it could scarcely fail to be so, but then it must have appeared to him dark, unintelligible, and obscure. He perceived, no doubt, that it referred to something of more than usual importance; but he had no accurate idea either as to the dignity of the suffer-

er, or as to the design of his sufferings, or as to the persons for whom he suffered. His mind, accordingly, appears to have been upon the stretch for further information on the subject; and suspecting, probably, that the passage which he had been reading in Isaiah had reference to some vital points on which he was yet ignorant, his soul would most likely be seized with certain painful anxieties, which would not be easily allayed, either by the attractive beauty of the surrounding scenery, or by the attentions of his official retinue, or by the reveries of his own imagination.

It was at this crisis, my friends, that he was accosted by the disciple Philip, who, in obedience to the angel of the Lord, had recently left Jerusalem for the very purpose, and soon overtook him by the way. Unattended and unintroducted, this faithful servant of Christ immediately entered upon his commission, by one of those delicate questions, which, without revolting the feelings of this nobleman, was yet sufficiently explicit to show, that as the stranger who addressed him was evidently acquainted with his anxieties, so he had in all probability the means in his power to relieve them. The subsequent part of the narrative, my friends, declares to us the issue. "Philip," it is said, "opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." The remaining events of the interview now followed each other in rapid succession; in short, the sermon was blessed and sanctified—the person to



whom it was addressed believed and was baptized—the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip—the eunuch saw him no more, but “he went on his way rejoicing.”

In order, however, to give the greater unity and simplicity to our subsequent observations on this subject, they may suitably be comprised, I think, under the two following general heads.

I. THE CHARACTER AND CONDITION OF THE PERSON REJOICING.

II. THE CAUSES OF HIS JOY.

In reference, then, TO THE CONDITION AND CHARACTER OF THE PERSON REJOICING, the first observation which naturally occurs to us is, that *he was a person of authority and rank*. It has frequently and very justly been remarked, that among those who cordially embrace the gospel, there “are not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble;” and it must be confessed that the remark, taken as a general proposition, is, no doubt, a true one. It must be confessed, my brethren, that as worldly wisdom is often addicted to pursuits which, if not hostile to religion, are at least foreign to its spirit, and its interests, so lofty genius, we know, is frequently prostrated to many ignoble purposes; while high station, on the other hand, instead of being turned to advantage in proportion to its facilities for usefulness and for improvement, is often employed in subserviency to a mere secular ambition, or the gratification of the minor passions and inferior propensities of our nature.

But although this be unquestionably true as a general proposition, it by no means excludes, you observe, particular exceptions: on the contrary, it is the peculiar glory of the gospel, that it has no spiritual monopoly among us. Destined for universal diffusion, as we know it to have been, it is indeed a grand and comprehensive scheme of redemption, which is fully and freely offered to as many as are willing to receive it; and as God, we know, is no respecter of persons, so he occasionally calls to a participation of his grace, individuals of every rank, of every country, and of every age.

Now, of this very fact, observe, the

case of the individual in the text affords us a most striking and appropriate example. Though born and educated an idolater, he was successively brought first within the pale of the Jewish church, and ultimately to a participation of Christian privileges—though raised to an elevated rank in a foreign court, he did not permit the splendour of his station to dazzle and delude him into a forgetfulness, either of God, or of his own spiritual safety—though surrounded on every side with all that could tempt him to sinful and relaxed habits,—the whole of this narrative, I humbly submit, plainly intimates that the care of his soul was his principal concern, and that, though occupied with the high causes and occupations of state, he was still more particularly engrossed with the far higher concerns of eternity. And while all this tends most powerfully to discredit the excuses of those, who presume to plead, that they are so immersed in business as to have little or no leisure for religion, it serves also most distinctly to show us, that by a prudent distribution of time, and by a proper improvement of opportunities, there are no conceivable situations and no conceivable pursuits, whatever be their magnitude and importance, which may not be ably and honourably performed in due subordination to those other and higher duties devolving on us all in relation to an eternal world. These and these only should have a permanent place in our affections; this and this only should form the paramount object of our lives; and this was pre-eminently the case with the distinguished individual here alluded to. He had high temporal duties to perform, and he did them well; had he left them undone, or had he performed them only in an indifferent manner, it is scarcely possible, I think, that he could have maintained that respectability of character, and that popularity at court, by which, very likely, he obtained leave and leisure to visit the city of Jerusalem on this occasion. On the contrary, (that is, on the supposition of his having been an idle and inefficient functionary,) the probability is, that he must have resigned the seals of office, before he could have

undertaken this journey; but the fact is, he retained the one and he accomplished the other; his worldly avocations were attended to, in subordination to, and in connexion with, his spiritual observances. His piety kept pace with his patriotism; while he honoured his queen, he did not omit to fear God; and according to the measure of light, which was then vouchsafed to him, we find from this passage that he undertook and travelled a very considerable journey to worship in the Jewish temple, agreeable to the faith which he professed.

Now you will observe still further, that the Ethiopian alluded to, besides having been a man of rank, and in office, was a *person of very firm and decided character*. Born as he was in a country where the worship of the true God was little known, and still less attended to, it is more than probable, as I have already hinted, that he had been educated in heathen idolatry, and that his mind had been early imbued with all those deep and inveterate prejudices which usually adhere to the votaries of an ancient superstition. It appears however from this narrative, that in this case the prejudices in question had been effectually overcome, and that in spite of all those ties which might naturally be supposed to have bound and warped his affections, he resolutely forsook the religion of his native land, and became a convert to Judaism. Whether this change in his sentiments was effected instrumentally by his having procured a copy of the Scriptures, which we find he was now reading, or by the ministrations of some unknown but not unhonoured preacher, or by his intercourse with those Jews who were accustomed to travel great distances on the enterprises of commerce; whether he was converted to Judaism by the instrumentality of any one of these circumstances, or by a concurrence of them all, is a point which it is not very easy to determine, and of no great moment to be ascertained; the fact is certain, that he abandoned idolatry and became a professor of Judaism. But what I wish more particularly to advert to is, that subsequently to this his first conversion, the firmness, and the deci-

sion, and the consistency of his character was altogether such, my brethren, as not only to claim our respect, but even to deserve our imitation. To repudiate the religious opinions in which a man has been educated from his youth, is a step which it is at all times painful to take, and which it is sometimes dangerous to avow. On the one hand he is fronted and opposed by the venerated example of his ancestors, and he is out-clamoured on the other by the voice and the violence of a contemporaneous multitude. Even in nations the most enlightened, where moral speculations have been carried to the greatest length, and where freedom has been permitted with longest and largest liberty, even there the toleration that is usually extended to difference of opinion on all other subjects, is usually withheld from him who abandons the religion of his country; the man who ventures to do so is generally covered with odium and with disgrace; he is regarded, for the most part, as an offensive excrescence on the face of society, which must be removed by all means, by foul or by fair, and which is sometimes corrected by the strong arm of the law.

But if such be the feeling of the enlightened, and the professedly liberal, and the worldly wise, what might we expect from heathen, from uneducated, savage, barbarous heathens, in circumstances precisely parallel? Attached to their idolatries, neither by the convictions of reason, nor by a respect for the Divine character, but by a blind and sensual fanaticism, which is generally stronger than both, it is natural to suppose, that openly to discountenance their superstition would only be to offend their prejudices and to provoke their rage, undisciplined as they are to any thing like close, patient, or consecutive reasoning; they know of no argument to support their opinions but the argument of physical power, therefore, before they can out-reason a man of firm and decided character, and of superior faculties, and of better information than they themselves possessed, they must first of all consume him to ashes, and they must release that spirit from its mortal bondage, which they

found it impossible, by any milder means, to silence or subdue.

Applying all this, therefore, to the matter before us, there is no reason to suppose that the conduct of the African Ethiopian idolaters, in reference to the conversion, or, as they would conceive it, the apostasy of their distinguished countryman, would be at all different from the conduct of other nations, in circumstances precisely parallel. Indeed, it may be questioned very much, whether the superior rank of this convert would not give a greater shock to their prejudices, and a darker and a deeper character to their fanaticism. Of this, indeed, there can be no doubt at all, that if in our own land any of the functionaries of government were openly disavowing, systematically dishonouring, the religion of the country, then the elevation of his rank, and the extent of his influence, would only give a greater aggravation to his crime; and his deprivation of liberty, of office, and of character, would be deemed all too little to atone for the guilt of his apostasy.

What may have been the precise treatment which this Ethiopian nobleman met with, on abandoning idolatry and embracing Judaism, we cannot presume positively to say. These, at all events, are the probable difficulties he would have to contend with—these the sacrifices he would be required to make—these the temptations which assuredly he would have to resist. In the face of all these things, however, we find that he made an open, an honest, and undisguised profession of his new sentiments; and if, notwithstanding this, he still retained his official appointment and royal favour, and his popularity at court, it just shows us, my brethren, practically, though our religious profession should expose us to many perils, and dangers, and oppositions, and difficulties, those difficulties, perils, and dangers may, after all, be overcome by real force of principle, and by a genuine integrity of character.

Though this distinguished person was, no doubt, strongly tempted to conform to the superstitions of his country in a vast variety of shapes, by early predilections,

by bias, by the hope of preferment, by the patronage of the great, yet we find that he was moved by none of these things; he had appointed a higher standard of duty, he followed the dictates of his own conscience; and if, in such circumstances as these, he yet maintained a decided and unshrinking profession of his Jewish principles, his conduct in this respect is eminently fitted to minister to our instruction, and is full of reproof to many, and is replete with instruction for all. It teaches us, my brethren, that if our religious profession be attended with difficulty and danger, even though it require from us an abridgment of comfort, and sacrifice of character, still it is *our* imperative duty to persevere; nor are we to conform to this world in its practical idolatries, in its sinful pleasures, or in its guilty and unlawful pursuits, even though they be sanctioned by custom, even though they be hallowed by antiquity. In the case of the Ethiopian there were many temptations on every side, if not to forsake his profession of Judaism, at least to conceal it.

But with us, blessed be God, brethren, there is little or nothing of the kind. The terror of making an open confession of our religious fidelity, and our religious profession, is in the present day scarcely, if at all, experienced; nor are the outward ordinances of religious worship confined any longer to Jerusalem, as in the time of this nobleman, who travelled so far to attend them. Instead of requiring us to perform long and laborious pilgrimages to procure the means of grace, and to attend upon the ordinances of the church, it has pleased God in his abundant mercy, to bring them to our very door, and we can sit each man under his own vine, and his own fig tree, and none dare to make us afraid. Let us, therefore, improve the day of our merciful visitation—let us hold fast the beginning of our confidence to the end—let us hold fast our profession, and be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and in the humble confidence and assurance, that if we confess Christ, and that if we act up to our profession—if we confess Christ, and remain steadfast to the end—

we shall with him overcome, and with him possess all things.

In reference, however, to the character and condition of the person alluded to in this passage, allow me to remark, in the third place, on this part of the subject, that he was not only a man of rank, and a person of firm, and decided, and consistent character, but he was also a *serious and diligent inquirer*. If it be a fair criterion to judge of a man's attachment to religious knowledge by the exertions and sacrifices which he makes to obtain it, then the sincerity of the Ethiopian nobleman must be beyond the possibility of doubt. Previously to the time alluded to in this passage, he must have acquired, unquestionably, a very considerable acquaintance with the Jewish economy; out not being content with the information he had already obtained, he had travelled no less a distance than from Africa to Jerusalem to obtain more; and even now he was engaged in reading the Bible. Far from indulging in that capricious and superficial kind of inquiry, which originates in no better principle than curiosity, and which subsides the moment that principle is satisfied, he appears, on the contrary, to have been a man in solemn and sober earnest. A man, bending the whole power of his faculties to the apprehension of divine truth, and in prosecuting this great object, his investigations were at once diversified and laborious; not confined to general statements, or to partial views, but steadily and diligently directed to the whole counsel of God; nor even when he had visited Jerusalem, and had engaged in the worship of the temple, did he permit himself to rest satisfied with his previous attainments, or with the teaching of the Rabbies, priests, and scribes. Anxious as he seems to have been, my friends, to make still further improvement in knowledge, he resolved to inquire for himself, he determined to receive no second-hand statements, he consulted the oracles of truth, direct he went to the fountain-head. Even when sitting in his very chariot, when returning home, when his mind might be naturally occupied in reflecting on the scenes which he had left, when

his pride might have been flattered by the cavalcade which accompanied him, the time, in his estimation, was all too precious to be wasted on any such trifles; at this moment, neither Jerusalem, with her lofty turrets, which he was leaving behind him, nor nature with her eastern loveliness; no, nor chariots, nor horsemen, were of any present interest to him; his soul was occupied with infinitely higher concerns, his mind was directed to a nobler subject of contemplation, his heart was engrossed, in short, in perusing the Scriptures of truth.

Now, the improvement that all this suggests to us, is as obvious as it is important. If, in the adorable sovereignty of divine grace, we have been brought into circumstances, and favoured with opportunities favourable for our advancement in spiritual things, let us imitate the diligent searching of this Ethiopian convert, who was employed in consulting the word of God. Let us improve the precious moments as they pass, let us prosecute our religious inquiries with an earnest purpose of heart, and with an humble dependence on the Spirit. Instead of resting satisfied with the measure of knowledge to which we may have already attained, let us throw off our listlessness, and set ourselves thoroughly and instantly to peruse this blessed book with more diligence, and with more interest, than ever we have hitherto done. If, in this way, we follow on to know the Lord, we have in the text, you will notice, an encouraging precedent to show, that we shall indeed know him, that our labour shall not be in vain, and that our inquiries shall be savingly blessed. And whatever be the temptations to which we may be exposed, whether the allurements of worldly society, or a fondness for unprofitable reading, or an undue attachment to the luxuries and to the pride of life, or a grovelling propensity for base and degrading indulgence; oh! let us remember, that as in the case of this noble individual who was now leaving Jerusalem in his carriage, so the chariot of time is rapidly rolling us along; therefore, it is our duty, like him, to read and to think by the way—that according to the swift-

ness of its motion we are, like him, proportionably receding from the earthly side. Like him, then, let us avail ourselves of every opportunity for receiving instruction that may offer, even though it may present itself in a form little calculated to conciliate our carnal pride, remembering the beautiful example set us by this distinguished person, who, when the humble Philip came up to him, when he interrupted him in his reading, was so far from repelling such an intrusion, that he received it with humility; he listened to his instruction without any feeling of pride, or distrust, or suspicion; he even invited him to come up into his chariot, and to expound to him the word of God—he condescended to be as a little child, and to receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which was able to save his soul.

Oh, dear brethren, “go and do likewise;” receive the word of truth as it is offered to you, in whatever form, so as it be the truth. In one word, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ as this Ethiopian did, let us follow his example by making a profession of our faith—by not concealing our principles—by not being ashamed to avow ourselves to the church and to the world. No sooner had he received this instruction, than he exclaims the very first opportunity that presented, “Here is water, what doth hinder me from being baptised?” If we know Christ, let us confess him before men, and he will confess us before his Father in heaven; and let us confess him not merely by attending to the ordinances of religion, not merely by being seen keeping our customary places in the church, not merely by associating with God’s people, but confessing him by joining his visible church, by doing this according to his own command and in remembrance of his name. In that case we are encouraged to hope that we shall partake of the blessedness of the Ethiopian, and, like him, “go on our way rejoicing.”

*To some the rejoicing of this distinguished foreigner may possibly appear to be somewhat unnatural and even unlovely. According to the narrative given to us, the gladness of the Ethiopian seems to*

have been immediately consequent on his final separation from Philip; and as believers usually delight in the society of those by whom they have been spiritually benefited, his conduct may seem to betray either a callousness of feeling or deficiency of gratitude; and it may perhaps, be thought that the circumstance of his having quitted such a valuable instructor, ought rather to have excited on his part an emotion of sorrow, and that had he dropped a tear at parting, it would have been at once a credit to his sensibility and a better proof that he rightly appreciated the nature and extent of his obligations. It must be confessed, indeed, that to see Philip caught away from his view by a sudden and miraculous interposition, was of itself fitted to inspire him with the most solemn and reverential ideas; and when to this it is added, that the person so removed was one to whom, of all others, he had been indebted, and to whose company he must have attached associations of the tenderest kind; then the rejoicing of this Ethiopian nobleman may, perhaps, appear to some persons to indicate either that he had set no great value on what he had recently heard, or that he felt so confident of Philip’s former instructions, as actually to pursue his journey without requiring his aid, and without deploring his absence. But though this objection may, perhaps, very readily present itself, there is really nothing in it to entitle it to much consideration. It is founded entirely upon an imperfect acquaintance with the practical effects of divine grace, nor can there be a doubt that the vindication of the Ethiopian’s joy on this occasion may be triumphantly grounded on the simplicity and sincerity of his faith. To suppose, indeed, that he was unwearied by the supernatural interposition of God in removing Philip from his view, or that he felt no regret at the loss of his spiritual instructor, is, in point of fact, a gratuitous assumption, which there is nothing in this narrative to justify; and though it may be true that notwithstanding both of these events he actually did go on his way rejoicing, this fact only proves the power and the efficacy of those doctrines

which he had recently embraced—it only proves that the gift of faith which he had received, had had the double effect, not only for preparing him for extraordinary manifestations of the divine power, but of consoling him even under the loss of a spiritual privilege—it only proves, in short, that though his present circumstances may appear to us sufficient to overwhelm him with the most painful regret, yet that the grace given to him was far more than adequate to counterbalance all such feelings, and to fill his whole soul with absorbing emotions of gratitude, and with an inexpressible feeling of joy.

But this, I trust, will appear more evidently by considering at greater length the second division of our subject, namely, the CAUSES or REASONS of HIS JOY. In the first place, it may be inferred that he will go on his way rejoicing, *on account of the new information he had obtained.* Though previously to the period alluded to in this passage this eminent person had for some time been a convert to the Jewish religion, the probability is, that his attachment to Judaism was little less than simply giving it a preference above the gross and absurd idolatries of Ethiopia, and that his acquaintance with it was limited entirely to a knowledge of its forms and ceremonies, without any direct perception either of their spiritual meaning or of their ulterior end. During his late visit to Jerusalem, his usual intercourse would be confined very probably to the scribes and to the Pharisees, who constituted at that time the higher orders of Jewish society, and from them, we know, he would derive no other kind of information than that which related exclusively to the ceremonial ritual, the only effect of which would be to fortify him more and more in his self-dependence, and in his spiritual pride. It is true, I acknowledge, he did indeed possess a copy of the Old Testament Scriptures, but then that he could neither understand nor apply them, is sufficiently evident from his own acknowledgment; for when Philip inquired of him, “Understandest thou what thou readest?” he replied, with a frank and straight-for-

ward ingenuousness, “How can I unless some man should guide me?”

Now, my friends, in such a state of ignorance as this, there can be no doubt, I think, that to his reflecting and intelligent mind, the worship, the forms, and the ceremonies of the Jewish church must have appeared extremely perplexing and dark. In the absence of that light which has been thrown upon them by the gospel, the only consideration that could commend them to his judgment, that of rendering obedience and adoration to one infinite and eternal Spirit, was incomparably more rational than to countenance the absurd idolatries of Ethiopia; but, so far as the grand question of his own personal acceptance with God was concerned, he was, in reality, not one whit more forward than before, and, as long as he was ignorant of the Saviour, in whom all the Mosaic ceremonies and all the Scripture promises were to be fulfilled, his attachment to the Hebrew worship was, in truth, only a different form of superstition, which, though less revolting to a cultivated mind, was in his case equally powerless, as well for pacifying the conscience as for purifying and renewing the heart. In the providence of God, however, the period of his spiritual darkness was now brought to a close by his having recently received a clear exhibition of the divine Redeemer, from whose sacrifice the Mosaic ritual derived all its efficacy and all its worth; Philip, we are told, “preached unto him Jesus;” and in what did such preaching consist? Was it to tell him that God was a being of infinite mercy, who would overlook his sins and short-comings, and who would regard such obedience as he might be competent to render as constituting a meritorious title to the divine favour? Was it to inculcate upon him that observance of external rites, and that veneration for vain traditions, which constituted so exclusively the religion of the Pharisees and scribes? Was it to tell him, in the absence of a confiding faith, and a perfect conformity to the Divine will, the Lord would be satisfied with a sincere but a perfect obedience on his part? No, my brethren, no such thing; to “preach

unto him Jesus," was to set before him earnestly, and clearly, and faithfully, the infinite holiness of his nature, the guilt and malignity of sin, the deep depravity of his own heart, the awful curse under which he laboured as a guilty and condemned creature, as well as his absolute need of a Saviour, and then to follow up those statements with a broad, full, and clear exhibition of the only method of the sinner's justification, not by the works of the law, but only through faith in the righteousness and the blood of Christ.

Now, observe, as such preaching as this is seldom unaccompanied with a blessing, so we find in the case before us that it was made abundantly effectual, in opening the eyes of this Ethiopian's understanding, and in opening up to him the glory of that mystery which had been hid from generations, "God manifest in the flesh." In the course of one single sermon, it appears, this distinguished Ethiopian found himself not only convinced of sin and summoned to repentance, but reconciled to his heavenly Father through faith, and blessed in a very considerable degree with the gracious influence of the Spirit. Having been previously, then, in a state of ignorance, of perplexity, and doubt, having been in a state of distrust respecting his spiritual condition, and his personal acceptance with God, he saw now in Jesus, whom Philip preached to him, the very Saviour whom he needed, and the only Saviour that could give any comfort to him. From the thralldom of Jewish rites, therefore, he now emerged into the glorious liberty of the church of God; and instead of continuing any longer as an alien and an outcast, he now received, in great mercy, the privileges of an adopted son. The rejoicing, therefore, of this eminent individual, you will notice, was not without a just and direct cause. He had found a physician for his diseased soul—he had found a balsam for his wounded conscience—he had received light into his darkened mind—he had found in short, a great and precious boon, which, while it purified and cheered his earthly course, taught him to look forward with hope, and brightened his prospects for eternity.

Nor was the joy experienced upon such an occasion in any degree peculiar to the Ethiopian. It is, indeed, the common happiness, generally speaking, of every believer, who has been made to participate, like him, in the riches of divine grace. From the moment that the Christian is enabled to look to the Saviour with that undoubting confidence, we fully and firmly believe in his perfect atonement for sin—from the moment that he sees Immanuel exalted to his mediatorial throne in the heavens, as an advocate for his people, and as dispensing those blessings which he died to purchase—from the moment he feels the divine influence come over his soul with an enlightening, and quickening, and conveicing, and transforming power—from that blessed moment he is a new creature. He sees that the work of his salvation is accomplished independently of himself—he is no longer under the dread of death, or the fear of hell, or the pains and penalties of the law—he is filled with joy and peace in believing, and he abounds in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. Instead of fretting, and murmuring, and repining under the divine dispensations, he rejoices in the divine goodness, and he submits with acquiescence to all the appointments of his heavenly Father. Instead of turning away from the world with disgust, as a scene only of turmoil, and misery, and sin, and instead of clinging to it unduly on the other hand as his only and ultimate portion, he regards it as his appointed place of probation, as his appointed place of discipline and trial, where his capacity is to be cultivated and improved—where he is to redeem the time—where he is to receive grace to prepare for a future and eternal world. Like the Ethiopian nobleman, he goes on his way rejoicing, even though his mind may occasionally, as undoubtedly it sometimes will, be overshadowed with sorrow and with doubts, it is only like a passing cloud which leaves behind it a purer atmosphere, a warmer sun, and a brighter sky; and he gathers a varied revenue of enjoyment from nature, from Providence, from the words, and works, and the ways of God; and he is constrained to the dis

charge of duty, not by a feeling of terror, but from a principle of love; and he is enabled to look upon God, not as a slave-master driving with the lash, but as an affectionate parent whom he delights to honour from a high sense of obligation, and with a happier spirit of alacrity.

In the second place, we may infer that the Ethiopian went on his way rejoicing, on account of his recent admission to Christian privileges. In obedience to the divine appointment, it was, you know, the practice of the primitive preachers of the gospel to introduce new converts into the bosom of the church, by administering to them the ordinance of baptism. That Philip had already instructed this new disciple respecting the nature and the obligations of that initiatory sacrament, is evident from the fact, that the proposal to receive it originated with the Ethiopian himself—"Here is water," said he, "what doth hinder me from being baptized?" And Philip said, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." And on the Ethiopian replying, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,"—"he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went both down into the water together, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him."

Now, my brethren, the administration of this sacrament to the individual in question, constituted, I doubt not, one of the principal reasons of his joy, and a rational one too. Not that either he or his teachers would regard this ordinance as essentially necessary to salvation—not that he attached to it any mystical, or miraculous, or superstitious virtue—not that he mistook the mere sign for the thing signified—not that he considered that to be regeneration which was only its appointed symbol, the rejoicing of his heart was based upon more enlightened principles, and established upon firmer ground. He rejoiced in his baptism, because it afforded him the first opportunity since his conversion of conforming to the express will of his Redeemer. He rejoiced in his baptism, because it presented him with a sacrament by which he could seal his adherence to the cause of Christ, and by which he could testify his

resolution to serve him in the face of his dependants, in the face of his countrymen, in the face of the world. He rejoiced in his baptism, in short, because it paved the way for his admission into the remaining privileges of Christian discipleship, and because it gave him a pledge of those gracious influences of the Spirit by which he might make still further advances in knowledge, and still higher attainments in holiness.

And here I would observe, my friends, with reference more particularly to the solemn ordinance of the supper which we have in prospect, that, though in the subsequent ages of the church's history, and in the more advanced stage of the Christian dispensation, we, being admitted to baptism in our infancy by virtue of our conjunction with professing Christian parents, have at that early period of life neither the capacity nor the means of making a Christian profession in the same way as the Ethiopian had; yet we are not, on that account, the less favoured with equally appropriate opportunities of a similar kind; for what the ordinance of baptism was to him, the sacrament of the supper is to us. If, therefore, on believing in the Lord Jesus, he felt anxious to take the first opportunity of testifying the sincerity of his faith by conformity to the Saviour's will, in the initiatory ordinance of baptism; how strong and how irresistible is the reproof, which his conduct, in this respect, offers to those, who, though outwardly professing it, and even inwardly cherishing the same faith with him, have hitherto neglected to give a similar testimony in the conformatory ordinance of the supper.

To believe in the Son of God with full purpose of heart, and yet to continue in the habitual neglect of those solemn and edifying ordinances, is in reality a practical contradiction in terms. It is at any rate an evidence of a very inadequate estimate of religious duty, and of a very imperfect conformity to the divine will; for while it is obvious you live in the violation of an express command, "Do this in remembrance of me," it is at the same time a neglect of one of the appointed means, in the use of which God is



especially pleased to meet, to bless, and to edify his people, and which of all others is fitted in its very nature and design to encourage our Christian profession, to revive our languishing graces, to promote our personal holiness, and to increase the divine light in our hearts and in our minds.

If, therefore, any of us be in such a condition as this, it becomes us to pause and ponder well the culpable incongruity of our conduct, and if, in sincerity of heart, we do believe in Christ as our only hope, all our salvation, and all our desire—if we do feel that in some humble measure we put no confidence in the flesh, but trust implicitly in his precious blood, and in his perfect righteousness, it is at once our privilege and our duty to manifest our faith, and to evince our gratitude by joyfully obeying the commands of the Redeemer, as this Ethiopian nobleman did, in earnestly desiring to receive the ordinance of baptism—it is our duty in like manner, in the holy ordinance of the supper, to give a public testimony that we are one with Christ in that ordinance which he has instituted as a festival for his people's refreshment, and as a memorial of the Saviour's love.

But in the third place, we may fairly conclude that the Ethiopian went on his way rejoicing, *on account of his augmented means of usefulness*. Occupying, as he did, a high and responsible place in the civil administration of his country, as being chamberlain or treasurer to the queen, it may naturally be supposed that he would be proportionably zealous, not merely for his temporal welfare, but also for his spiritual improvement. To a mind like his, it is not unlikely that the idolatry of Ethiopia would be considerably distressing, not so much as it was a proof of the intellectual degradation of his countrymen, as because it afforded a lamentable evidence of their moral and spiritual degeneracy. Even under his former profession as a Jew, before he was converted through the preaching of Philip, it is highly probable, I think, that the abolition of idolatrous worship would be to him the cause of many an anxious thought, and, perhaps, the object of many

a benevolent scheme, as it certainly would be the ground of many a fervent prayer. How much more ardently would those views and designs be strengthened within him, now he became enlightened with the truth of the gospel, now he became admitted into the liberty of the sons of God, now that his heart was enlarged with all the kindly sympathies, and charities, which the gospel of Christ never fails to impart. Accordingly, it is stated in ecclesiastical history, though it is impossible to avouch for the fact in the most satisfactory way, it is recorded that on his return home into Ethiopia, he was the means, under God, of planting a Christian church; and depend upon it, my brethren, that the very moment we arrive at a clear, and full, and personal appreciation of divine truth, it is like good seed in the soil, it must germinate, and quicken, and disseminate itself throughout all the influences which we have, in our family circle, in our immediate neighbourhood, and in the society in which we live. It is the very nature of the grace of the gospel, when it is received into the heart, to extend its influence to others—it is the very nature of the grace and love of the gospel to desire to impart its influence to those in whom we feel an interest, or with whom we may come into contact; and this has been the case, not merely with the Ethiopian alluded to in the text—but with many other Scripture characters; look at David, for example, when he exclaimed, "Restore unto me the joys of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit;" what did he immediately rejoice, as a natural and necessary consequence, "then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." Therefore, when we receive the truth in the love of it, and in all its practical and purifying power, one of its very first effects on the soul, will be to lead us to take a deep, and tender, and affectionate interest in the condition of our fellow-creatures; and therefore, knowing this to be the case, is it not clear to a demonstration, when the Ethiopian thus saw his way to usefulness opened up, he felt his means of usefulness were extended—

when his spiritual information was increased—when he had imparted that light to others, which he had enjoyed himself, is it not clear that this would be one of the grounds of his rejoicing, and that he would “rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory?”

That you, brethren, may go on your way rejoicing, let it be your constant and anxious care to cultivate a holy nearness unto God, a close living with God, a firm and unwavering faith to comply with the will of Christ; to seek to be crucified unto the world, and to have the world crucified unto you, and never forget that it is sin alone and unbelief which can wound the believer's conscience, or damp the ardour of his joy. Let it be as ardent in your case, as it was in the case of the Ethiopian—let the exercises of faith and holiness produce a glad heart and a cheerful countenance; and in order that you may exhibit religion in an amiable and practical view—in order that you may exhibit it for your own comfort, and for the encouragement of others, I would say, in the language of the apostle, “Rejoice in the Lord always; and again, I say, rejoice.” Rejoice if you have been made a partaker of the grace of God—rejoice in that you have been delivered from the fearful pit, and from the miry clay—rejoice in the access which is opened to you of daily communication between earth and heaven, to a throne of grace, through the merits of Jesus Christ, in the rent vail of the Redeemer's blood—rejoice in the privileges that are opened up to you as the professing people of God, admission to his table, association with his people, fellowship with the saints, and all the high and countless privileges of the church—rejoice in the precious blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin—rejoice in the agency and work of the Spirit, which is given to you to be your comforter, your enlightener, and your sanctifier.

To you who have neither received the truth, in the love of it, nor are living according to the grace of the gospel—to you who are contenting yourselves with a mere pharisaical profession, a name to live, while in reality you are dead—to you who are acting the hypocrite among men, and palming a cheat upon God, I have no such exhortation to give; for “there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” In your experience you must already have found, if you will speak out, that a life of sin and a life of joy are altogether incompatible. Then I would ask, why will you persevere in that way; that way, broad and apparently beautiful though it be, which leadeth down to destruction. Oh, pause, I beseech you, before you proceed another step in unbelief and iniquity, before you permit another Sabbath to pass without pausing to consider of your actual condition in the sight of God, guilty and condemned under his law, without hope and without faith—pause and consider before you proceed another step, which, for any thing you know, may precipitate your ruin, and seal for ever your doom. The free offer of an unconditional pardon is once more made unto you. Believe, then, the testimony of God concerning the only Saviour, Jesus Christ; and if you receive that Saviour, as he is offered to you in the gospel, as all your portion and all your hope—if you receive him as having wrought out an everlasting righteousness, with which he is willing to clothe you, as having made a perfect atonement for sin, whose provisions and benefits he is willing to impart to you, then, my brethren, you also may take part with the Ethiopian noblemen, and instead of being in sadness and in sorrow, you may go on your way rejoicing; and so, when you come to the end of your journey, an entrance shall be ministered unto you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.—Amen.

## SERMON XLVI.

### EPHRAIM'S IDOLATRY, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

PREACHED

BY THE REV. W. B. WILLIAMS, M.A.

AT MARBOUF CHAPEL, CHAMPS ELYSEES, PARIS.

*"Ephraim is joined to his idols: let him alone."*—Hosea iv. 17.

"ART thou he that troubleth Israel?" said the fretful Ahab to the faithful prophet, who had done an act of *kindness* in the path of duty, when, in boldly reproving him for his guilt, he likewise warned him of his danger.

But thus it is in every age, that the messengers of God have almost always found "hatred for their good-will," and contempt and scorn, indignity and outrage, as the return for their benevolent endeavours. Could they condescend to flatter, sought they only how to please, dare they cry, "Peace, peace!" to all who listen to their speech, and admit the necessity of their labour; no doubt but the reception of their message would be very different from what it really proves: strange, however, as it may seem, and while, in other circumstances, persons will prefer upright dealing to deception of any kind, and submit to temporary inconvenience and present suffering, in order to their future good, in *spiritual* concerns it is precisely the reverse; *here*, as the apostle predicted, "men will not endure sound doctrine;" in other words, they will bear with cold ethics, and "the calm terms of mild philosophy;" they will not object to legal tenets, and will be content to rest in lifeless forms: but for "the truth as it is in Jesus," and as it intimately affects themselves; for a religion that shall probe their consciences, and control their life, they have no ear

nor heart. "Let us alone," say they; or if you preach, "Prophecy unto us smooth things; prophecy deceits, (only do not call them so;) say nothing to us as to the state and condition of our souls that shall 'torment us before the time.'" Nay, such is the infatuation, that, notwithstanding the Scripture invariably represents those souls as morally defiled, incurably diseased, yea, as spiritually dead, and drawing near to the bitter pains of an everlasting death, (and themselves acknowledge all this in their formularies of devotion, and not unfrequently feel this "witness of death in themselves," from the aspic poison of the old serpent preying on their vitals, and rankling in their veins,) they will rather *die* of their complaint, than have their consciences *disturbed* upon the subject!

And sometimes they *have* what they desire: as in the days before the flood, God's Spirit does "not *always* strive with man;" even long-suffering itself has been exhausted; and the despisers and mockers, who so much the more presumed and hardened their hearts, because God waited to be gracious, have been either suddenly destroyed, or given over to impenitence and insensibility—a state, if possible, yet more dreadful (as will be shown presently), though its sorrows should be more remote.

The precise period, or closing of what has been called "the day of grace," being

mercifully concealed from man, its existence can form no rule or guide for his procedure: hence a Simon Magus, though "in the gall of bitterness," and under the strongest of all bonds, is yet to be exhorted to "repent;" for, until the night of death arrives, we believe that the greatest sins may be forgiven. Who, meeting even an Iscariot rushing from the judgment-hall, would have said to the traitor, "Now there is no hope?" Who would not rather have said, While life exists, O let not hope expire! Wretch as thou art, "a Saviour to the uttermost" can relieve in circumstances though atrocious, and horrible, and peculiar, and unparalleled, and indefensible, and degraded, and desperate, and damnable as thine!

But whatever be the dismal cloud, the more than midnight or Egyptian darkness involving such sad scenes, our state, thanks be to God, is not thus wretched and forlorn; yet be it remembered that every day of vanity and dissipation, of trifling unconcern, and "neglecting our great salvation," is an approximation towards it; for it is a "provoking Jehovah to swear in his wrath that we shall not enter into his rest;" and to say to us in effect, individually, what was once said nationally, "EPHRAIM IS JOINED TO IDOLS: LET HIM ALONE."

There are doubtless many ways of treating the text: we might expound the words, and then deduce the doctrines; or we might qualify, establish, and improve it; or it might be proposed in various different lights for inference or discussion: we confine ourselves, however, to two general and leading particulars, in order to a direct application of the subject to ourselves; and in this attempt may God the Holy Ghost succeed it by his blessing! Consider we,

*First, THE SIN OF EPHRAIM; and, Secondly, THE PUNISHMENT THAT FOLLOWED.*

I. *The sin of Ephraim* — "EPHRAIM IS JOINED TO IDOLS." By "Ephraim," in this place, we are not to understand the single tribe so called, and to which Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, that great inciter to evil, belonged; but the whole of the nation who had revolted from Rehoboam, the son of Solomon: it stands,

therefore, for the ten seceding tribes, and, as is more generally expressed, for Israel at large, the terms being confessedly synonymous.

Now, whatever iniquities were common both to the kingdom of Judah and of Israel, it is certain that this last was most especially prone to idolatry; and which, in part, may be accounted for from the circumstance of their having excluded themselves from the temple service at Jerusalem. To gratify them for their supposed loss in separating from the house of David, and fearing the consequence of their again mingling with their brethren, their crafty leader set up an idol worship in their coasts; and to which association or symbolic adoration of the creature, together with the Creator, (notwithstanding their severe discipline in the wilderness,) they appear to have been exceedingly addicted — "to wit, the calves that were in Dan and Bethel:" a repetition this of the molten calf which Aaron made in Horeb, and the remains of an Egyptian bondage on their minds, in regard to the god Apis, and a blind reverence to Osiris and Isis, the tutelary divinities of the land in which their ancestors had so long sojourned.

Though here, again, we do not exactly imitate "the children of Ephraim" in our general disposition and desire, and perhaps stand directly opposed to them in these outward and leading particulars, let us not from hence conclude that there can be no need of our being cautioned against their abominable sin; nor vainly imagine, because all of us assembled here this day are professedly Christians, and worshippers of the one true Jehovah, and have just heard and avowed our belief in and obedience to the second commandment, that we are necessarily divorced from idols, and the haters, and enemies, and demolishers of all false gods: true, if a man place at once "the stumbling-block of iniquity before our face," we become offended, and are ready to trample it and him indignantly beneath our feet: if he should raise an image on a public pedestal in any of our squares or plains, though the statue be of gold, we

are content that it should be overthrown : but if deities like these, or of any other kind, will take a different form, or bear another name ; if they will take our level, and first stoop ; that they may rise, and serve, that they may henceforth govern ; " Ephraim, that silly dove," falls into the net of the skilful fowler, and gives them all they ask. Admitted once into the human heart, that temple of the Deity, how soon, " when sitting in the place of God," are they " worshipped as God ! " Obtaining the citadel, who ever dreams of dispossessing of his stronghold him who ever is to us a strong man armed, and who keeps his prisoners in what may be termed a state of peace, though slumbering on destruction's brink ? a peace resulting from the absence of thought, the torpor of feeling, and the assistance received from his auxiliary, the world ; and which arises from the delusion of its promises, the delirium of its dreams, the intoxication of its pleasures, and the infatuation of its pursuits.

Without entering at present into any detail as to these several objects to the sight, offerings to the sense, and opiates to the mind, it may be sufficient to remark that, generally speaking, idolatry is represented in Scripture as being two-fold, it being outward and internal, public and retired ; and that it does not consist chiefly in acts of religious homage. Whether in open or private devotion, we are sure that there are idols in the heart ; there may be also idols in our families, idols in our houses, we had almost said idols in our churches ; all which are neither of wood, nor iron, nor brass, nor stone ; there are found, too, idols in our legitimate callings, permitted relaxations, and enjoyed pursuits. In a word, " loving and serving " the creature more than the Creator is idolatry, whatever be the object on which that supremacy is placed, and that preference be shown. Hence covetousness and sensuality (Eph. v. 5. Phil. iii. 19) are classed under the degrading term equally with the genuflection of the body, or the more abject prostration of the superior faculty of mind.

It is, then, a present and existing evil,

and will be seen farther as a prevailing, a constitutional, a besetting, and a most abhorrent sin. For, ah ! who hath never yielded that love, fear, duty, fidelity, preference, zeal, and confidence to something earthly, which heaven alone should claim ? Shall we, dare we, prevaricate with Ephraim, and say, respecting this, " I am pure from sin ! " ?

" *Ephraim is joined to idols !* " and true it is of many, whether called Israelites or Christians, in this and every place. Far be it from us to contend for the seclusion of the hermit, the rigours of the anchorite, the superstition of the scribe, or the formality of the Pharisee. We are not at all disposed to be cynical ourselves, in principle or practice ; we know, too, it is forbidden us to be censorious as to the peculiarities and failings of others ; and least of all would it become any preacher of the gospel to abuse his liberty of preaching it, by hurling the thunder of his anathemas on the land in which he is not a subject, but only a stranger privileged ; but no supposed, though mistaken tenderness to others should render him indifferent or treacherous to his trust. We must be faithful to you, my brethren, and to ourselves, though here ; and remember that we cannot, dare not sink, commute, transfer, or even lessen, because we are here, one particle due to our heavenly King, any more than that we owe to our earthly sovereign. Reside we where we may, we are not less British. Why then, or how, can we be less Christian ? " We cannot go where God is not ; " and whoever reigns, " we have another king, one Jesus. " Suffer me, then, my fellow-Christians, and my fellow-subjects, to ask of you this day, " Who is on the Lord's side, who ? " Whose harness have you girded on, and whom is it you serve ? Can any thing be more palpable (we repeat it) than that " the multitude follow evil, " or any thing more plain than that we are forbidden so to do ? In proof, what are the societies in which our countrymen, (answering in the text to Ephraim,) yea, so many of them are enrolled ? Who are the persons with whom they more intimately associate, and where are the places in

which they feel themselves most delighted and at home? We speak not now of any spot distinguished from the rest: it does not become us to select "Chorazin, Bethsaida, or Capernaum;" but we might say of these, and we may assert of every metropolis especially, be its meridian that of Judea, or London, or Paris, or Rome, what a prelate of our own church (Bishop Watson) observed, (and the thunders of a Boesuet, and the tears of a Fenelon, would have attended him,) that "every such great city is the hot-bed of vice, and the sepulchre of virtue; the grave of the noblest feelings, civil, moral, and religious."

And who, standing on some eminence, and but noticing the heat and turmoil of the day, and not least on this most holy day, ordained to be the Christian's rest; whose spirit but must be "stirred up," as was St. Paul's at Athens, at seeing places so populous, so elegant, so exalted, so renowned, and sometimes so highly favoured too, almost "wholly given to idolatry!" And equally, perhaps, in the sight of the omniscient Being with those who erected an altar to the unknown God, or to Israel of old, when they "joined themselves to Baal Peor, and ate the meat-offerings of the dead!"

"*Ephraim is joined to idols*," and it is both a natural and captivating sin; we mean by it one which falls in so easily with our inbred and corrupt propensities—"the evil heart of unbelief, and that so readily departeth from the living God." Evidences of what this abomination that maketh desolate really is, have been already given; we only add, ourselves will afford further proof of the witchcraft and stubbornness of idolatry, whenever we become at all unchristianized, and unchristianized we are if, forgetting our baptismal vow to "renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh," either here or in any other place, we live not according to the gospel, but forsake the God of our fathers, and the sanctuary of our God. In fact, by so doing, men are already prepared for every evil work; nor can it, we think, be a question but that the gross-

est idolatry which either distinguished Greece, or disgraced Rome, would be more acceptable to thousands than the pure and self-denying doctrines of the gospel. For though we find no employment for Demetrius and his craftsmen to polish the "silver shrines of the goddess Diana," have we no agents to whom this kind of traffic may refer? What, though no fanes arise to Jupiter Olympus, nor do any seek shelter beneath the ægis of Minerva; yet if we find men saying "to the work of their hands, ye are our gods;" if we see them turning with disgust from the Scriptural embassy of peace, and scarcely troubling themselves to frame an excuse from attending "the marriage supper of the Lamb;" if they will openly profess they discern no beauty in the graces of the Spirit, and discover no melody in the praises of Zion; if there be contempt poured on all Christian mysteries, and they who so strive or serve are considered as hypocrites, or bigots, or fanatics, or fools, then can we doubt that those very men who now drink in the very spirit, adopt the very terms, and pursue the very vices by which paganism was distinguished, would be among the first to agonize for the garland in the Isthmian games, to seek advice from the Pythian oracle, to water anew the laurels of the god of war, and to listen entranced to the lyre of Apollo?

"*Ephraim is joined to idols*," and this is itself a besetting sin, especially in a strange and foreign land. In ancient times we read that the "sons of God" were ensnared by "the daughters of the land" through which they passed; as, in after-date, many were "beguiled by those enchantresses of Midian;" and is there not reason to fear that there are those (professed Christians too) who in like manner "have made shipwreck of faith," and yielded here to those temptations which heretofore they had the fortitude to resist? Not so much that the temptations were really greater, but because the restraints were fewer, and former assistances were distant and removed. And, ah! (to the younger part of my auditory I more directly address myself) if any of you should here throw up the

reins on the neck of your impetuous desires, how bitter will be the regret, even should any discipline hereafter reclaim you! But the more usual result is, that the bank being broken down, the inundation follows, and that you will proceed "adding iniquity to sin!" Thus, if Ephraim be joined to idols, after their idols they will go. So that neither mercies vouchsafed, nor blessings manifold, nor vengeance threatened, nor visitations dire, nor heights of exaltation, nor lowest depths of woe, have ever aroused them from their fatal slumber, dissolved the enchantment on their senses, or burst the fetters on their mind! Rather have not such shut to the door of their prison-house (or, as a late high-priest of fashion more elegantly rendered it,\* "have drawn up the blinds of their carriage, and determined to sleep the remainder of the journey") the better to shroud themselves in darkness, and shield themselves from interruptions! or, having "eaten and drank, and rose up to play," have they not taken "the sackbut and psaltery, and sackbut and flute," and issued forth with modern arts or "antique pomp and pageantry," that, as "at Tophet of old," the melody of the strains may overpower the cries of the expiring victim, and the splendour of the drapery may conceal the deformity of the image.

"*Ephraim is joined to idols*;" and it is a most horrible and destructive sin! All sin, indeed, is abhorrent and dangerous; but this has of all others the heaviest sentence, as it has the least excuse; so that the inflictions upon Ephraim for this one thing form a continued commentary of this truth. For this the divine arrows have so often been sent abroad; for this the firm earth hath been shaken to its centre, hath opened her mouth, and such numbers of its inhabitants have gone down quick into hell, wickedness being among them; for this "the floods have lift up their voice, the floods have lift up their waves," and overwhelmed those who thought they stood beyond its highest mark; for this "the pestilence hath often walked in darkness," and hand in hand

\* Lord Chesterfield. *Vide his Letters, ad finem.*

with "the sickness that destroyeth at noonday," gorging even the voracity of death, and more than peopling "the house appointed for all living;" and for this war hath also depopulated their crowded cities, and desolated the once fertile plains, while pale famine, in its rear, hath exterminated the small residue of what "these locusts had spared." All these things happened unto them because He was wroth; and they were, as the psalmist expresses it, "the blasting of the breath of his hot displeasure."

And when these "woes are past," say ye with the uplifted trumpets, and the full-charged vials of the Almighty's wrath, (Rev. viii. 2; xvi. 1.) is there yet "another woe to come?" Supposing all your visitations over; is it possible for us to conceive any thing to exceed the visible and felt judgments of an almighty God? Yes! there is, as to its ultimate effect, a "sorer punishment for sin," a sadder proof of righteous indignation, and something more, perhaps, to be deprecated than the heaviest inflictions of his hand. And what is that? It is the closing of his heart, the saying, "Do not strike, alarm, or threaten; chastise him not; give him not over into the will of his enemies; but give him up (which is worse) give him up to his own heart's lusts, and to follow his own desires;" give him up to himself. "*Ephraim is joined to idols*: LET HIM ALONE!"

We shall notice,

## II. THE JUDGMENT upon *Ephraim*, or the PUNISHMENT of his crime.

In its primary signification, the text is, perhaps, to be understood as an admonition to Judah not to hold any familiar intercourse with idolatrous and backsliding Israel, similar to the injunction of our Lord to his disciples, respecting the scribes and Pharisees in his day—"Let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind," &c.

But it is of most importance to consider the words (what, in fact, they eventually proved to be) as a sentence of dereliction, and which still hangs over this once highly favoured nation. God hath left them alone, and with an hitherto impenetrable "vail upon their hearts,"

for a long night, now approaching to near two thousand years. As a people they have "dwelt alone, and not been numbered among the nations:" tribes of "the wandering foot and weary breast," ye have no country, no place to call your home! Yet, O Israel, though "thy house be left unto thee desolate," gross as is thy ignorance, inveterate as is thy prejudice, incurable as seems thy blindness, stubborn as is thy pride, and invincible thine unbelief, yet thou, even thou, "wilt not be left alone for ever:" there is hope in thy latter end, and great shall be the peace, and high will be the privilege of all thy children!

To ourselves, however, as we are showing, the subject has an aspect, and the threatening has a voice no less than to the Jews. For, notwithstanding, and considered as a nation, so far from leaving us alone, it cannot be forbidden us to think or say, God hath not dealt so with any other nation; sometimes indeed, disciplining us by afflictions, but far more generally following us with mercies, and "drawing us by the cords of love." Yet from these very circumstances, if we feel inclined to strengthen ourselves in a false security, we shall but bring upon ourselves increased punishment, as the added culture of the vineyard of the Lord of hosts appears to be the assigned cause why "its hedge also should be broken down," and why "the clouds" from above were forbidden to communicate their invigorating influences. (Isaiah v. 3-6.)

**LET HIM ALONE!** The phrase is evidently elliptical, and leaves something to be supplied. It is addressed to some one or more, but to whom expressly is not said. It is spoken to intelligences we do not see, and it is heard and attended to, probably, by those of whom we have no knowledge—invisible agencies and unearthly forms! Suppose we stand amidst the hallowed circle and obedient hosts, and notice only such as we either know or have been instructed to consider or personify as the instruments of the Almighty's purpose, hearkening to the word, and accomplishing all his will and pleasure? Suppose it said,

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*Angels!* let him alone. Stand no longer "in the path of this son of Bozor, who so loveth the wages of unrighteousness." Let not his foot be crushed against the wall, but let him reap the harvest that he soweth. Let him proceed "as the ox to the slaughter," and as the fool to the correction of the stocks; let his way be dark and slippery, and let his steps take hold on hell.

And thus those sacred watchers heard, and answered, and obeyed, who had hitherto attended in the temple at Jerusalem. The historian of the Jews relates, that a little before its final overthrow by Titus, and while the priests were ministering, who "by night stood in the house of the Lord," that at that solemn midnight hour, strange voices were heard within the holiest place, when no forms were seen, and where no human agency might enter. And that they said, "Let us go hence!" intimating that now their angelic guard was fled, and "Ichabod, their glory, was departed."

*Providences!* let him alone. Adverse and afflictive as ye are esteemed when often "kind heralds sent in love," ye shall no longer call him "in the day of adversity to consider." Break not upon the slumber of his soul; let him no more be scared by visions, nor disquieted by dreams; let no terrors make him afraid, nor corrections make him humble, nor disappointments keep him safe. Let him alone to pull down his barns and build greater, and interrupt him not in the requiem he is singing to his soul. Let him alone to "prosper upon the earth, and gain riches in possession." Let him alone to riot by day in the palaces of luxury, and repose at night in the pavilion of magnificence. Let him alone to "crown himself with rose-buds, and chant to the sound of the viol, and boast himself, that to-morrow shall be as this day, and yet more abundant."

*Ministers of the sanctuary!* let him alone. "Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among his prophets." And to you it hath been so spoken—"Pharaoh's heart is hardened;" therefore ye may say to him at your last interview, "Thou hast well (or truly) said;

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for I will see thy face no more." And again, "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from being king of Israel? And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death!"

And though with the prophet, they cannot cease to mourn for "the ungodly," and (not having received an injunction so particular and express) we must continue to warn the unruly, to reprove the disobedient, to resist the gainsaying, no less than to invite the unworthy, and entreat even the rebellious; yet if the holy and blessed Spirit of God shall cease to strive with man through these appointed means; if God himself deny his aid, though the arrows of conviction should still continue to be discharged in a rich profusion, and the sword of the Spirit be wielded, and we should still cry, the sword of the Lord and Gideon, these weapons will not enter between the joints of the harness, nor penetrate the shield of the mighty! The trumpet of our jubilee may not cease to sound, but the captive will not be awakened from his slumber, nor leap to lose his chains! The alarm in Zion may still be heard, and the wind that shall shake the mountains, and the fire that can rend the rocks, may attend it; but if the Lord be not in those, oh, who shall make the sinner tremble; what shall bring him from his cave, and "covered with his own confusion," as with a mantle?

Especially, when, under circumstances like these, we suppose the interdiction to be addressed to what is put within the man as well as what stands without the citadel; for we conceive it spoken, too, to what has been aptly termed God's viceregent in the breast. It has been said,

*Conscience!* let him alone. And the deputy hath heard, and answered, and acquiesced. It hath retired from its post, it hath demolished its reverberating echo, it hath lost its former voice. Thus Felix found conscience let him alone; for often as he heard, it should seem that he trembled only once.

Or, like another deputy, henceforth it is "a Gallio, caring for none of these

things." Even for a season we find, that the heart of David, lately so tender, troubled and smote him when he offered the least indignity to the worthless Saul, only because he had been the Lord's anointed, now, "let him alone" for many months under those complicated crimes, the remembrance of which so embittered the remainder of his days.

Many other characters or agencies might be introduced, had not our time been already much exceeded; such as affectionate friends, pious relatives, honourable feelings, &c. We only add, and it may include the means of grace,

*Ordinances!* let him alone. Ye mountains of Zion, and whither the tribes go up to worship, and thou little hill Hermon or Mizar among the rest, be ye henceforth to this hypocrite in heart as the mountains of Gilboa, on which there shall be no dew. Or when it shall copiously descend on others, let it be to him as what Gideon saw, that his fleece continues dry! Let the fruitful land become a wilderness, and to him let the well of salvation be without water, and the cloud that returns have neither refreshment nor rain! Need we seek for instances to illustrate this? We refer, once for all, and beyond all this, to the head-astounding and heart-appalling malediction on the sacrifices of Doeg and of Judas—"And let his prayer be turned into sin." Ps. cix. 7.

And now, my Christian brethren, without enlarging further, you cannot, methinks, but come to this conclusion, that, what some seem to have been labouring for all their lives, and others venture only to desire (for it is the secret wish of many a heart) is, that in some way or other, they could sin decently and yet with more impunity; proceed to greater lengths, with feebler checks and fewer fears; that, instead of this being a consummation devoutly to be wished, we have proved it to be the most dreadful calamity that could possibly befall them; and, to adopt the striking words of a modern author, it may eventually be "worse than instant death and an immediate hell, because the longer life, the longer sin; and the longer course of sin, the heavier curse!" And

this witness is true, for it is the award of the heaped-up wrath against the day of wrath, and the curse upon the Amorite, whose iniquity is full.

On the one hand, then, let none rejoice, in consequence of any truce with their afflictions, any victory over their fears, or any exemption from their former apprehensions, unless it arise from truly scriptural grounds. And,

On the other, let none despair, because they are so troubled and perplexed; or that since Jehovah seems to have a controversy with them, that therefore he must hate them. O, no; the convictions of sin, when under the influences of his most holy and gracious Spirit, are preparatory to sweetest consolations from the same. Despair of salvation by any other way than through the atoning blood and justifying righteousness of our God and Saviour, is the day-spring from on high visiting us, and which always dawns on the darkest hour of our former night! O, if we are but chastened, surely it is that we should not be condemned with the world. "Correct me, then, O Lord, but not in thine anger; rebuke me, but not in thy hot displeasure." Psalm vi. 3. Say any thing of or to thy servant, rather than let him alone.

Therefore, and to conclude, that our meditations may not sit beneath a cloud; while we congratulate real Christians on the happy choice they have made, and exhort all to walk worthy of the high and holy profession into which they have been called, we will not renounce all hope even as to this Ephraim, no, not where otherwise his state might seem most dangerous. So far from it, that were the reference made (which it is not intended that it should be made) to ourselves only, as British subjects, and members of that pure and apostolical part of Christ's church established in the British realm, I bless God for the very different and cheering prospect this day seen, and in this very place, from what myself witnessed, above three-and-thirty years ago! We are warranted to hope that already at least a sheaf or two are suffered to intimate, that one day, even these fields (the Champs Elysees) will be white unto a future and

a glorious harvest. Already are several excellent men of different denominations labouring in the word and in doctrine, and through the good providence of our God, and his putting it into the heart of "a brother, whose praise is in all the churches," for "devising liberal things" (the Rev. Lewis Way,) you, my respected hearers, are here supplied by the regularly and episcopally-ordained ministers of your own establishment, and may and do "sing the Lord's song," though in a strange land. O neglect not such advantages; turn not away from such a service; "forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." Let it not be said that you have left your religion (if you had a religion to leave) on the other side the channel. The land of your fathers you cannot forget; you are no doubt pleased with the recollection this day of "the sound of her church-going bell," her infant schools, her villages spires, and her rustic minstrelsy, as well as of her cloisters pale, her lofty temples, and her full-voiced choir; but, and above all, rejoice in her religious privileges, as a land of Bibles, and for her so signally possessing that treasure, even the glorious gospel, which alone ennoble what is mean, and consecrates what is exalted. Show, then, that you remember them still! Say, with the devout psalmist, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning: if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; yea, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." Ps. cxxxvii. 5, 6.

Here we thought to end. But where have we left Ephraim? We must trespass yet a very little longer, and however otherwise, as much against our will, as it can be against any of your wishes: for concerning this very Ephraim, we will not despair, but rather hope that, "at evening time it may be light to him!" For we know that he who spake from Sinai, ever speaks to us from Calvary; that he long "whets his glittering sword," before he gives it leave to smite; as his distant thunders threaten, that his nearer lightnings may not harm.

If one of these children of Ephraim be here present, though "grey hairs be upon him," and he is thus old in sin, it is a proof, we trust, that even he is not left to himself, or to reap the wages of his work! God forbid that he should! And to this end may he especially bless this final application of the subject, by permitting and sanctioning the transferring or inversion of its terms!

*Go yet again*, (we think we hear him say,) and proclaim my words—"O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help found"—"how shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together!"

*Go yet again*, (he seems to say to all his hosts,) clad with new zeal, and armed with fresh power! Let my Spirit strive, my servants plead, my ministers attend, my dispensations teach, and my appointments strengthen! Therefore, "go yet again."

*Ye angels!* who excel in strength, go return to your encampments, as Mahanaim, or God's host, and "having ministered, still do minister." Ye who so exult over the returning prodigal, ye shall rejoice over the repentant Ephraim. Again shall Gabriel sing, and Raphael strike his golden harp!

*Earth, earth, earth!* hear ye the word of the Lord, in all my providences, which,

like "seed-time and harvest, shall not fail," but continually teach mankind. The voice of judgments shall sound abroad, and the lessons from my mercies will be obeyed.

*Preachers of my word!* "Watchmen on the walls, give me no rest until I establish Jerusalem," and restore again the outcasts of Israel! resume your stations, plead and weep between the porch and altar. Intermit not your labours, neither be weary of your work. "Go yet again, and preach the preaching that I bid you." Erect the glorious standard, unfurl the bloodstained banner, bear aloft the consecrated sign. Set the trumpet to your lips, proclaim the gladly solemn sound! Seals shall be given to your ministry, and souls awarded for your hire!

And thou, *Conscience!* Be thou "sprinkled with atoning blood," to keep thee pure; active in thy office, and faithful to thy trust; preserved from evil, and prepared for bliss! While to the worshippers in Zion it is also said,—“I have not forsaken the place where mine honour dwelleth: go up to Bethel, that I may meet and bless thee there. Let not the fire upon mine altar be extinguished, nor the symbols of my presence be any more withdrawn; but let refreshing from the same be vouchsafed, and the inscription read on this and every sanctuary erected to the glory of my name—Jehovah Shammah! the Lord thy God is there.”—“To whom,” &c. Amen.

#### CONTRASTS.

THERE was strange pomp and revelry  
In the chieftain's splendid hall:—  
Sweet song—gay dance—and minstrelsy  
At the gorgeous festival.  
Pride kindled in the noble's eye,—  
“What power shall dare endeavour  
To mar our bliss—guests, pledge we high,  
Our pleasures live—for ever!”  
There was gloom, and want, and suffering  
In the peasant's lowly cot,  
Hard fare, keen pain, and sorrow's sting,  
Were the inmate's daily lot.  
Faith cheered the peasant's humble breast,—  
“Poor though I be—whenever  
I think of yonder heavenly rest,  
I feel I'm blest for ever!”

I saw the lake of quenchless fires,  
And souls on its billow tost,—  
Despair—remorse which ne'er expires,  
The worm of the deathless lost.  
Grief filled my bursting heart,—I cried,  
“Shall this distress end never?”—  
The shrieks of millions loud replied,  
“These pangs endure—for ever.”  
I saw the countless, happy throng  
In the blissful regions high:—  
White robes—gold crowns—and lofty song—  
With their harps in harmony.  
Hope brightened at that dawning sight—  
“Shall aught from heaven sever?”  
And myriads sung—“Our peace, joy, light  
And glory, last for ever.”

## SERMON XLVII.

### THE INQUIRING LAWYER.

BY THE LATE REV. ADAM CLARKE, LL.D.

*"And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live."—Luke x. 25—28.*

You see that our blessed Lord has put the creed of a Christian into a very narrow compass: and in such plain words, that it is impossible for the very plainest Christian not to understand the meaning of it. And yet there is a depth in these words that requires the deepest attention, and the exercise of the most extensive powers. So it is, indeed, with *all* the words of God; and especially with those in which he sums up our duty and our interest, our prosperity in this world, and our glory in that which is to come. If these words be correct, we may judge at once of the spirit in which we should receive them: and though we may suppose the words to have been used by a captious person, yet it must be remembered that the words were not framed by that person, but are a quotation of the words of the Most High; and words which Christ, in the most solemn manner, has incorporated with his gospel.

I. Let us look into the CIRCUMSTANCES CONNECTED WITH THESE WORDS.

We find that our Lord was nearly alone, or engaged in private conversation with his disciples. He speaks as one struck with the astonishing provision made by God for the welfare of mankind; and it was well known to him, for it was through him that such provision had been made, and he was now engaged in giving instructions as to that provision. "And he said, Blessed are the eyes which see

the things that ye see!" They had seen the Messiah: he it was that now conversed with them. They had beheld his miracles, and were convinced that "in him dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily," for none could do what he did, who had not unlimited power. They had heard also the words that dropped from his gracious lips; and especially that new commandment, which was contained indeed in the Old Testament, but which had now come to them in a way it had not come to their fathers; namely, that they should love God with the whole of their powers; and also, that they should love one another.

And yet, my friends, *our* eyes and *our* ears have been more blessed still! We have heard more of the nature of the dispensation of blessedness, and of the salvation of hundreds and millions of souls by means of that dispensation, than they ever heard. Many things were afterwards made known to them, of which they had no previous conception; and it appears as though it were necessary that only general outlines of truth should be given them, till Christ had filled up the scheme of prophecy, till he had offered himself as the great atonement, till he had opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, and till his Spirit had been sent down in such copiousness as had never before been known in any age of the world.

He tells them that "kings and great men desired to see these things, and did not see them; and to hear these things, and did not hear them." And I have often been much affected while reading what Peter says on this subject. He intimates that the prophets were sent to publish glad tidings which should be made known to the nations of the earth. "Of which salvation," he says, "the prophets have *inquired and searched diligently*. Searching what the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." And the part that affected me most was this; that they understood that "*not unto themselves*, but unto us they did minister" those things, when they proclaimed the coming of Jesus Christ, his passion and death, and the glory that should follow his manifestation in the flesh. So that with all their wisdom and all their inquisitiveness, though they knew enough for their own individual salvation, they had not that full revelation which we enjoy. And the apostle goes on to say, "Which things *the angels desire to look into*." The original expression is very strong; it is a stooping down towards the object, so as to take the full advantage of the strongest sight—an opening and expanding of the pupil of the eye as far as possible. It is expressive of their desire to have the most distinct conception of the things which God had revealed, and was about to reveal, to the world. So that *we* comprehend the scheme of salvation, and all that is necessary to our individual salvation, in measures beyond what was known to them. Well, then, may a preacher say to a congregation of believing Christians, Blessed are your eyes and your ears, for you have seen and heard such things as prophets and kings had not seen and heard; and you have had such views of God's love in its extent, and in its powerful influence on the souls of men, as none ever had before, and I am apt to think were not felt by any of those good men; God having reserved these full displays for the time when his Spirit should be poured out, and the followers of Christ

be taught those things which were not to be learned even under his own ministry.

"A certain *lawyer*," it is said, "stood up," &c. The word "*lawyer*" is not understood by most readers: it means a man who was well acquainted with the law of Moses, and all the rites and ceremonies connected with it; and also with all those laws and instructions which were added by the chief doctors of the Jewish church. They knew not only the precepts of the law of Moses, which was *written*, but also all the particulars of the *oral law*,—that part which was supposed by the Jews to have been delivered by God to Moses, and by Moses to Aaron, and by Aaron to his sons, by word of mouth; and which the Jews believe to exist in the Mishnah and the Talmud. The *lawyers* had not only to tell the people that there were such and such laws; they had also to unfold their true import. For this purpose, the book of Deuteronomy was given: this teaches plainly the spirit and design of the law; containing, as it were, a second edition of that law. The *letter* of the law was first given; and then the book of Deuteronomy, to illustrate and show the *spiritual* meaning of that law: and it is remarkable, among other things, that the rite of circumcision was interpreted, in that second edition, in such a spiritual way, that all who attended to it were reminded of the necessity of having all that was impure and unholy removed; so that the seeds of holiness might be well rooted, and abundant fruit be brought forth to the praise and glory of God.

I have observed that this man is often spoken of as a *captious* person—as one that lay at the catch, and wished to entrap our Lord. But I believe that scheme had long since been given up. The Jews, generally speaking, were convinced that he was "a teacher come from God;" and that all attempts to entangle him in his talk would be utterly vain. The opinion I have referred to is entertained of this lawyer, because it is said that he "stood up, and tempted" Christ. But that word means also to *try*—to *examine*—to ascertain how far his knowledge and his piety went; how his temper would bear out.

and so on. I should rather conceive of him as a *humble inquirer after truth*. He asks one of the most important questions which a man could ask, who knew that he had an immortal spirit, who was conscious that he had sinned against his Maker, and who knew that he could not cleanse that impure fountain from whence the various streams of evil had flowed. I think it quite impossible that such a man could ask such a question in a trifling or in a captious manner. He said, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" My brethren, have you a more important question to put to your God? "Master, I acknowledge thy wisdom; I submit to thy authority. I come to thee, though I am a teacher, and have to explain the law to the people. I declare my willingness to come to thee, that I may learn the way of salvation for my immortal soul."

And, mark again:—he speaks as one who knew that there was an eternal state; that in that eternal state his immortal spirit might be wretched or happy; and that, in that state, the misery must be *extreme*, and the happiness also *extreme*. It was, therefore, very important to know how, in that state, a man might have the happiness of which heart could not conceive; and escape that wretchedness and misery which, from being eternal, must be extreme.

But let us not look at this man merely. I have a right to believe this of you also. You are seriously inquiring, I would hope, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life? I am a creature of a day; I know not what an hour may bring forth; I am a mere tenant at will under the supreme governor of the creation: I cannot bear the thought of dwelling in eternal burnings! What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Objections have been raised against this man, because he said, "What shall I do?" "Oh, yes!" say a certain class of people, "he was a *work monger*—he wanted to *merit* eternal life!" And who warranted them to say so? Before persons make such objections as these, it would be well for them to examine carefully their Bibles, and endeavour to ascertain their meaning; and not hastily to

suppose, because a man cannot pronounce the shibboleth of their creed, that his inquiries proceed from a guilty hardness and indifference of heart. I have heard many such things said, and I pity those who say them: they display but little of the spirit of Christians. "What shall I do," said this man, "to inherit eternal life?" The very words show that the mind of the man was enlightened. He knew that he must have *meekness* for that eternal life, or he could not *inherit* it; that, if he would inherit it, he must first be one of the family: that it belonged only to the children; and that, if he were not of the family of heaven, he could not inherit the kingdom of God. "What shall I do to *inherit* this life? I am conscious that I cannot have it otherwise; it must come to me in consequence of my being united to the family: I know that I do not belong to the family, in a way of *natural* holiness, or by having walked in all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord blameless; I know that I have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, and that I can only have this title to the inheritance of eternal life in the way of adoption. I want, therefore, to be taken into the family, to be associated with it, incorporated into it, and share the kindness and love of the Father of this family." This is what we call adoption: when, in consequence of the merits of Christ, who died for sinners, and was given for the salvation of men, he who believes is accounted one of the family of God, receives the forgiveness of his sins, and has the Spirit of holiness implanted in his heart. Such persons God puts among the children, and they become interested in all the promises God has made to such.

Observe: this man does not ask, "What shall I *believe* to inherit eternal life?" And yet, if some had found him using these words, how would they have been struck with wonder at his correctness and wisdom! "It shows," they would say, "that he was well aware of his own state; that he knew well he could *do* nothing; and therefore he asks, What shall I *believe*?" But I believe that if he had done so, he would have spoken incorrectly. And who is he that dares intimate, that

he meant "What shall I do to *merit* it?" No: I will venture to pledge myself, that no such idea ever entered into this man's heart! No: he came to the teacher, and he says, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life? How shall I go about it? I feel myself eternally undone if I get not this meetness; and how shall I obtain it?" We often use the words in this way; and the language denotes illumination of mind, and intention of heart. "What shall I do? I know that I must *have* it; and what means shall I use to get it? How shall I act?" Now, if we were to hear a man inquiring in this way, we should say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ"—"Lay hold on the hope set before you in the gospel!"—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." And all this we are fully justified in saying; and all this is necessarily implied in the answer made by our Lord to this man.

II. And now, brethren, are you prepared to fix your minds fully on that answer? I am aware that it requires much reasoning—much argumentation and impressive speaking, to get a man to enter fully into the scope and design of any particular subject. He *hears* the truth, but he does not *feel* it. I say, then, we are all on the verge of eternity; we must soon "die, and be as water spilled upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again." We have all "sinned and come short of the glory of God;" and we may be assured, that if God has given us a time of probation, and we do not use it to the end for which God has given it, we shall, without doubt, perish everlastingly! It is not a vain thing, therefore. And again, our *hoping* and *trusting* that the inheritance will be ours, can do but little good; we must have a *right* to the inheritance, or we shall never see God's heaven. We have no *natural* right: we must have it by adoption; and this can be alone through the endless mercy of God in Christ. Right and meetness are both necessary. There was a good thought in the mind of a strange man, who a few years ago flourished in this city. He imagined that *all* souls, when they left this world, would go to heaven; but that

the souls of the *wicked*, astounded at what they saw, would immediately flee, and tumble themselves headlong into the pit of corruption; and because they were not prepared for happiness, they would plunge themselves into misery. And really, if an unregenerate man *could* enter heaven, he would have no heart for it: his mind is not framed for its enjoyments, but the reverse. The being in such a place would be *hell* to him; it may be a heaven to the *blessed*, but its happiness is of a nature that *he* cannot enjoy.

The question, then, is, how are we to be regenerated? How are we to get this title—this meetness for eternal life? Our Lord answers, 1. "What does the law say?" and 2. "How dost thou understand what the law says on this point?" "What does thy Bible say, and how dost thou read it? What are thy views and apprehensions on this subject? How dost thou suppose thyself to be concerned in all this?" The man most intelligibly answered, "*Thus* it is written; *thus* I understand it: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.' This I understand to be the highest privilege, the bounden duty, of a rational creature." And our Lord said unto him, "Thou hast answered right; this is the sum, the substance, of all true religion; this do, and thou shalt have this eternal life." He was "*willing to justify himself.*" In this he showed the ardent working of his mind towards this title, this meetness for eternal life. He could not bear the idea of being destitute of this. We may see from this what a difficult thing it is, humanly speaking, for the Spirit to bring us to see our real state: to the very last we are prone to indulge a hope that our case is not so desperate as the representations of the gospel seem to imply; it is long before we can be brought to see and feel that we are totally lost. He was ready and "*willing to justify himself;*" and he said unto Jesus, And *who is* my neighbour? I know my God, the Being whom I should love with all my heart, and soul, and mind, and strength; and who is this other being, whom I should love even as

"I love myself?" Our Lord then gives him the little history which is generally known by the name of "The good Samaritan;" and leads him on to conclude what was his real state, both in reference to his God, and in reference to his neighbour.

Now further, brethren; for there is much remains behind. Here is a Being set before us in these words, who is called "God"—"the Lord"—Jehovah—the High and Holy One; and so on. He is the Creator of the earth, and of all creatures. He is the Sovereign, who produced all things by the word of his power, and who upholdeth all things by the same word. He is your Creator; and he is also the great cause of your preservation. He is the self-existent—the Eternal—the independent. All that is made is produced by him, and depends upon him; and therefore all should acknowledge him as the source of all, the Creator of body and soul, the Preserver of both. As your Creator, he has shown the riches of his wisdom and power in both; and he has shown his benignity and kindness in preserving you. You are not to forget to think on him in reference to *his own* infinite excellencies and perfections: but you are not now called upon to take *these* views of him; but rather to consider this sacred Being, so incomprehensible both to men and to angels, in reference to *yourselves*. He is your Creator;—the cause of your being. He is your Supporter;—upholding all things by the word of his power. There is not a morsel of bread that you eat, which comes not from him as the Creator and Preserver. He alone "causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man." He alone produces the rich varieties of fruits and of vegetables for the benefit of man. He alone causes the same soil to produce at once verdure, and odours, and fruitfulness. He alone causes the sun to shine; and whatever we ascribe to its influence in causing trees and plants to grow to maturity, his power gives the sun that ability. And whatever it may have contributed to the comfort and support of man, all comes from him alone; and if for one moment he were to take his hand from that sun, it

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would sink into its primitive state—that state out of which God called it by his omnific word. And if God had not supported and upheld all according to the counsel of his own will, men could not have had that suitable food and clothing, in the various climates, with all their various temperatures, with which they are so blest. God *made* and *supports* ALL;—so that wherever a human being is found, that human being owes his life to God, and his continuance in being to that great Preserver. Even in redemption, it is impossible to conceive of greater favour on the part of God. There we see the proofs of his mercy in pardoning our sin, and so on; but I will not say that this is greater. It was a proof of his love, that he created beings capable of holding converse with himself; and when man fell, that *same* power and love which created him formed a plan for preserving and saving him. Hence Christ was made manifest in the flesh, and became "man with men"—not a prophet, not an angel, not a seraph, but a being such as God had never before made; to manifest the highest effects of his eternal power, and to display the highest benefits that could be possessed. He comes into the world, and teaches men what God only could have revealed; and exercises a power which God only could exercise, and which God could not communicate; for an omnipotent being to appoint an omnipotent *delegate* is impossible; because he who delegates it must cease to be omnipotent, and so cease to be infinite and eternal. In God, as the Creator, therefore, we see the proofs of infinite skill and power; and we behold his unrivalled beneficence, in his meeting and supplying all the wants which his creatures may feel. When we come to consider the redemption of man, we behold, indeed, a greater extension of the divine love; but we discover no new feeling.

Now, on this very consideration is established the command before us, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God—this very Being, who is thy Creator and Preserver." And if a sense of the highest obligation is allowed to affect those who are under that obligation; if we should love that

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Being whose kindness is so great—whose commands have reference to an object that is eternal—and whose favour is the source of all blessedness; then there is reason in the command, "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.*"

But what does this mean? I believe not one man in ten thousand, or in ten million, can explain this! I have studied the subject most closely, and I cannot express its meaning; I cannot explain the feeling of love; I cannot explain the way in which it is produced—the mode of its internal operation—the way in which it catches hold—in which it seizes on all the powers of the mind. It is an affection of the soul which ought to go out after God; which should confess him to be supreme; which should lead us to give up our souls and our bodies, with all their powers, whatever they are, to him; thus giving him evidence that we are not altogether insensible of our infinite obligations.

Love has been defined as a *disposition of mind which leads a person to be intensely satisfied with the object of his affections*. Now, if this can be said of love to man, how much more may it be said of love to God. This Being has all that I can possibly want: all good, all kindness, all perfection, flows from him. I want this Being for my portion; and if I can have him for my portion, I want no more. Here I can rest; and if I can say, "Thou art my portion, O Lord!" this is the highest word that I can speak—the highest word that ever was spoken by mortal man. The conviction that he *must be* such, or that we are lost, is much; but to feel that he *is* so, this is a great thing indeed! Then, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God,

1. *With all thy heart.*" Whatever can be called by the name of heavenly feeling, holy aspiration, spiritual wishes, is all included here. All divine breathings, all holy and benevolent purposes, all intense adoration and delight; and this feeling must be supreme: it is the love of the whole heart. Love has all here, and leaves nothing behind. All the hopes, and inclinations, and desires, relate to God, and are regulated by him. But then,

2. This love does not consist in mere feeling; else we should be led into numerous errors: all the affections and desires of the soul might be taken up in heavenly raptures, to the neglect of grand and important parts of Christianity. This induced a good man, who differed from us in many points, to say, "What will it avail in the sight of the Most High, to go and fall down upon your knees before him, and to look up to him and say, O, how excellent thou art, how pure, and how glorious! Here let me worship and adore thee! Here let me gaze for ever in admiration of thine excellencies! Once feeding the hungry, or clothing the naked, or visiting the sick, would be infinitely more acceptable to God, and avail able in his sight, than all the idle adoration you can offer him!" How, then, is the love of the heart to be proved? Why, it is added, "*Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy soul,*" or rather, "*with all thy life.*" This means, not only that the whole of our life should be employed in the service of God, but that *the life itself* should be dedicated to God; that it should be given up to him, to employ it as he may see fit; and that we should be ready to finish our life in his service, should it be required. It is on this principle alone that there ever was a MARTYR in the church: they "loved not their lives unto the death," but freely yielded them up, when they were called to do so for the sake of God. We are not, at this moment, very far from the place where many of our forefathers and foremothers suffered in this way, at a stake, which I have seen, though the *complaisance* of our times has induced us to take it away, because it seemed a reflection on the cruelty of our ancestors; but at a stake in Smithfield, in the midst of flames, many yielded their lives to Him who was the object of their love, and the Father of their spirits. This is the very principle of martyrdom; they dedicated their lives to God, and gave those lives up when it seemed necessary—not only when they were called to die in the common way, but when their death seemed to be required by peculiar circumstances.

3. *Put forth all thine energies; love*

God "with all thy strength." There is a great force in *thought*: sometimes it will lead a man to go from one place to another, to accomplish a particular object; at another time, all the various powers of the man will be gathered up, and all will be brought into a focus, as it were, to act on a particular point; and the man, fearing neither men nor devils, will trample Satan under his feet, and serve his God alone. Now, put forth all the energies of your minds thus in God's service: be not cold-hearted in God's work. If the devil can ever love, he loves such men; and considers those as the most valuable supporters of his cause, who, while they profess to love God, put forth their strength for every thing but the service of God. Be careful, then, to exert all thy powers of body and soul in the service of the Lord thy God. Then,

4. Thou hast a *mind* also. "Love God with *all thy mind*." The mind is that gate of the soul, by which God admits that light by which the judgment is able to decide positively and rightly. Thou shalt keep this gate open to receive that light which alone can teach thee what is right; and, what is also of high importance, thou shalt *put out* what is not proper or profitable. O, how much lumber have we laid up in that repository!—how much trash that is unprofitable!—how much impurity that we are afraid to mention! Labour to get rid of all this. One of the finest effects of the Holy Spirit's influence on the human mind, is expressed in that fine sentence in the communion service—"Cleanse the *thoughts of our hearts* by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name." O, go to God, that he may cleanse thy mind! God says that he will "purge away the filth of Zion, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning." In other words, I will pour light into thy soul; I will lead thee from

chamber to chamber, to see the images that are set up; I will reveal to thee all that is abominable; and then I will tell thee that I will famish all the false gods; but thou must make an effort; thou must loathe these abominations; thou must cast away these idols to the moles and to the bats. Thou must give them up—not as a sacrifice to thy God, that is a most awful idea—but give them up to God, that they may be burned and destroyed for ever. Thus God *condemns* them as "a spirit of judgment," and *destroys* them as "a spirit of burning."

Then it is added, "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*." Mark! it is not said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thy God*. This is interesting: there is an intensity of thought and feeling in reference to the love of God, that it would be evil, unholy, sacrilegious, to apply to our fellow-men. I am very glad that those thoughtless and profane words, which it was once very common to apply to women, cease to be employed. To answer wicked ends, and to delude them in many cases to their ruin, poor women were set up in the place of God, and worshipped accordingly. This is nearly laid aside. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thyself*." "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." But what love do I owe to my neighbour? I owe him the love of *equity*—of *succour*—of *benevolence*—of *charity*. I must aim to do him all the good I can; to advance his interests; to sympathize in his joys and sorrows; to promote his welfare. "Love thy neighbour as thyself:" whatever thou wouldst wish him to do *for thee* in ignorance—in weakness—in sorrow—in want—in danger,—*that* do thou *for him*; thy turn may be next. And again, God is the Father of all; therefore we should love as brethren of the same family. He is the Lord, the Creator, the Judge of all; and all are alike before him.

## SERMON XLVIII.

### AN IMPORTANT INQUIRY.

BY THE REV. HENRY RAIKES, A. M.

CHANCELLOR OF THE DIOCESE OF CHESTER.

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*"What do ye more than others?"—Matt. v. 47.*

It has sometimes been asserted that there was a difference, a difference which was capable of being perceived, a difference which it was important and necessary to mark, between the statements of divine truth which are contained in the several parts of the New Testament.

In agreement with this notion, the gospels have been held up in distinction to the epistles. The discourses of our Lord have been described as differing in tone from the writings of his apostles. A separate and peculiar character has been ascribed to each, and the excellencies of one have been used to depreciate the glories of the other. Moral truth has been claimed for one, doctrinal accuracy has been ceded to the other; and though it might seem hard to say how one of these qualities could be separated from the other, or how truth could be independent of itself, the pride of human reason has endeavoured to avoid the homage which was required by faith, by professing an earlier attachment, a more implicit devotedness to moral obedience; and by asserting a preference of that which was practical in statement to that which was doctrinal. To favour this subterfuge the morality of the gospel has been held up to the admiration of the world by those who shrink from belief in its doctrines; and men have acknowledged in our Lord "the teacher sent from God," who could not or who would not perceive in him the 'Lamb of God which taketh away the

sins of the world." In other cases, an attempt has been made to represent the instruction contained in the gospel narratives, as more simple and appropriate than that which is laid down in the epistles; and that portion of Scripture, from which our text is taken, the sermon on the mount, has been described as including all that was necessary for man to know. We need not shrink from the conclusion. Let but this portion of Scripture be interpreted as it ought to be; let it but be read with that spiritual mind and that eye of faith which is necessary; and we may admit, that all that is needful for man to know may be discovered and discerned in it, or at least may be deduced from it. But because the experienced eye may perceive in one part of Scripture the forms of that wisdom which is specifically revealed in other places, it is neither wise nor dutiful to reject the residue; nor if one part of revelation supposes or anticipates the remainder, can that be a reason why the part should be used to supersede the whole.

But we are also told that there are differences in men which require a different mode of teaching; that there is a childhood in the spiritual life which requires milk for its nourishment, as well as a manhood or maturity of life which requires strong meat; and it is asserted that the former species of nourishment is to be found in the simpler statements and plainer exhortations which are contained

in the gospel narratives. It is there said undoubtedly, and it should be read with thankfulness and praise, that our Lord "taught the people as they were able to bear it;" that he adapted his instruction to the state of his hearers, and communicated the truths which he came to teach, in the way of gradual disclosure. Something of this process we may probably perceive in the tone of his discourses; and whatever we may think of the recorded statements of those discourses, such, we may confidently suppose, would have been the character of his ordinary teaching.

But little does he know of the word of God or of the power of God, who can doubt the possibility of combining the simplest moral truth with the profoundest doctrinal verity; of making the person taught "wiser than his teachers;" and of "perfecting praise even out of the mouths of babes and sucklings." In the wisdom of God it is easy to accomplish that which seems impossible to man. He, who in the twilight of the morning opens that flood of light which is to spread the splendour of noon over the world; he, who encloses in the infant the germ of those talents which are to wield the reins of empire; he, who once concealed the very glories of the Creator of the universe in the child Jesus; he, can surely give instruction in a way, which shall adapt itself to every state of man; can form out of the same material milk for babes, and strong meat for those of maturer age; and offer in his word a spiritual manna, which shall be suited to the taste, as well as adapted to the wants of all who feed upon it.

Let it be admitted then, that in this memorable discourse there are truths presented of the simplest character and in the simplest form. That hinders not, but that truths of the profoundest nature may be likewise found there. Let it be supposed that our Lord addressed himself on this occasion to a multitude of simple and uninstructed hearers, and "spake as they could bear it." That hinders not, but that the most advanced Christian may find room for meditation, and improvement in the words; or that the

wise man may be overwhelmed by truths which he meets with, and which his reason is unable to comprehend; while the child, who reads in faith and in the spirit of prayer, shall be made "wise unto salvation" by what he learns.

The text before us, the text to which your attention is to be drawn, presents an instance of this sort. It contains an appeal which might be made with propriety to the simplest hearer of the simplest gospel truths; an appeal, which we might make to any one, who had but the slightest acquaintance with the elements of religion: and still it is an appeal, which I humbly believe may be made with profit to the most enlightened, the most advanced Christian. It is an appeal, which rises with the condition of the hearer; and which grounded on the perpetual and necessary connexion between privilege and duty, follows man through all the degrees of his advancement; and reminding him at every stage, "of the rock from which he was hewn, of the hole of the pit from which he was digged," subdues the pride and self-sufficiency of his nature by the memorials of his dependence and responsibility.

It is to this text then I have now to beg your attention; and conscious that it involves an application of truth most important and most extensive, I entreat the prayers of those who hear me, that the weakness of man may be supplied by the teaching of the Spirit, and that the word may be blessed to all our souls.

"What do ye more than others?" Thus spake our Lord, at that time, to those who professed themselves his followers; who had come to him out of Judea and Galilee; who had expressed a resolution to renounce the sins of their former life, and to live as his disciples, "soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." The appeal he made was founded on a principle which no man ventures to impugn; that increase of knowledge, larger measures of conviction, involve the necessity of more exact obedience; that much is required from him to whom much has been given; and that increase of means implies increase

of responsibility. This truth, simple as it seems, bears on itself the marks of eternity. It extends to every degree of state. It belongs to every age. The Jew, just awakened from the darkness which covered his people, heard it then; and the apostle, who had "seen things which it was not lawful for man to utter," might have heard it afterwards; and each might have bowed under the sense of a responsibility which they could not deny. The Christian child feels its power now when a mother's exhortations are based upon its application; and the Christian minister must not hope to soar above its reach, however elevated he may be above others in spiritual or intellectual advancement.

As such then I would use it first in reference to Christians generally, in reference to all those who profess the gospel of Jesus Christ, and are in name and privileges considered as his disciples; I would use it first in this sense, and say to all who hear me, "What do ye more than others?"

If God has chosen you from all the nations of the world, to be a peculiar people to himself; if we are justified by the name you bear, and the knowledge you possess, and the covenant relations in which you stand, in addressing you as "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people:" If God has opened to you things hidden from the foundation of the world; if your eyes see, and your ears hear, the things which prophets and kings desired to see and did not see, and to hear and did not hear: nay, if we may say to some, "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit:" If we are permitted to address a Christian congregation, a Christian people, in terms like these; then must we not add; if God has done so much for you above all the other children of Adam, what do ye more than they?

In the heathen world, amidst much that was evil, much that was loathsome, there were not wanting "things lovely and of good report." They had their

splendid sins. They had, it is true, but a faint and clouded light to walk by; the dim light of human reason, darkened by all the exhalations from the corrupt nature of man; and it was by this faint and feeble help they endeavoured to discern amidst the tumult of the world, the essential differences between right and wrong. But to the guidance that they had, some of them were faithful. The natural affections were not extinguished; a sense of truth was felt; the excellence of purity was admitted; and in the midst of general defilement and wretchedness, the eye dwells with wonder on some bright spots of disinterested integrity and warm affections, and marvels how it was that they who knew so little should do so much.

If then we turn to a Christian community, and find men satisfied with those external observances which self-interest suggests as expedient; if we find a nominal disciple of Jesus Christ dwelling with complacency on the soberness of his habits, on the integrity of his dealings, on the warmth of his natural affections; may we not say to such as these, did not even the heathen so? Do we not hear of well ordered societies, and attached families; of the charities of parent and child, of husband and wife, of sovereign and subject, among them? Nay, do we not hear of integrity and temperance, of exemplary self-denial and eminent purity of conduct among those who had never enjoyed the light of gospel truth, or been encouraged by the promise of eternal life; and if this be so, what do ye more than they? What do ye, who have received so much, and who have heard so much; what do ye more than others? What does this Christian country, this Christian family, this Christian husband, this Christian father, this Christian son, offer in his conduct, which might not find its parallel in Greece or Rome; among those who never heard the sound of the gospel, nor tasted the sweetness of Christian privileges? Are you sober? So were they. Are you honest? So were they. Are you tender in domestic relations, faithful to trusts, diligent and useful? So were

they. And if your standard of Christian practice is limited to these cold moralities, or to these impulses of natural feeling, "What do ye more than others," or how do the children of light differ from the children of darkness?

I would carry the application of the doctrine farther. I would carry it next to Protestant Christians, to members of the church of England, to those who conceive that by the reformation they have shaken off a yoke of bondage, have regained their spiritual privileges, and are restored to the liberty, the glorious liberty of the children of God. In rejecting the traditions of men; in making Scripture the test to which every statement of truth is to be brought; in taking the word of God, the pure and undefiled word, as the rule we are to follow, we seem to have struggled into light, to have recovered the free exercise of reason, and to have left the regions of darkness behind us.

If this, then, be the case with regard to privilege, with regard to knowledge, how stands the case with regard to practice? If the tree is known by its fruits; if men look for grapes on the vine; if they expect good fruit from the vineyard which boasts a goodly stock; what may they not expect from a church, which has thrown off the trammels of darker ages; from a church, which has reverted to the earliest standards, and which is "built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone?"

We may venture to assume that a purer faith, a clearer view of divine truths, will produce a purer practice, a higher moral standard; just as ignorance and error gradually but surely lead to superstition, idolatry, and vice.

If God then in his mercy has vouchsafed to us a light which is denied to other nations; if we see the truth, and hold the truth, while others hardly see, or hardly hold it; what do we more than they? What fruit can we show of the privileges bestowed; or how have we improved the talent that has been committed to our trust?

To take one instance out of many, it is

the boast of our church to have cleared the doctrine of justification from those erroneous views which the pride of human reason and the hardness of the heart of man had formed upon it. We rejoice in asserting that "we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings." Nay more, we repeat the assertion, and say, "That we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort." We delight to trace innumerable rays of truth concentrated in this statement of our church; and to mark the way in which "God is shown to be just, and yet the justifier of them that believe on Jesus." But, my brethren, what is the result of this doctrine, and what is the effect which this knowledge of the grace of God produces? Do we see the hearts of those who profess this doctrine, bowed down with a sense of the mercy that has visited them? Do we see our Protestant congregations worshipping in silent awe at the grace in which they stand, and lost in wonder at the freeness of the bounty, which has thus offered to those who believe, that which no labour of man could have obtained, no merits of man could have purchased? Do we see around us, do we feel within us, that peace with God which is named as the privilege, the inheritance of those who are justified by faith? And is this faith, which we name, and name with reason, as the charter of our hopes, as the ground of our confidence, a faith which overcomes the world, which sanctifies the affections, and proves itself to be of God by the works which it does within us?

We dare not assert, we would not say, that those from whom we have withdrawn, and who have not obtained those advantages we enjoy, are destitute of fruits of the Spirit. We know that devotedness and zeal, that love for God and love for man, have been beautifully exemplified in members of the church of Rome. We know that the piety of those, whose views of that grace of God which bringeth salvation, were indistinct and cloudy, has often been

found shining brightly and burning strongly. We know that their work and labour of love has been glorious and great, though they knew but little of that love which is made known to us; and though they saw not all the freeness of the grace to which they trusted for redemption, they have loved much in return. But if we see their error, if we mourn over the blindness which has happened to them in this respect, and wished that they were even as we are; if we feel that in knowledge of the will of God, in acquaintance with the mysteries of his nature, and the riches of his grace, we stand immeasurably above them; what do we more than they? What has been the result of our clearer light, of our deeper views; or how have we shown by our works, the character of that purer faith by which we walk?

Again, as Protestants we have renounced the vain distinctions which have been imagined as to sin. We know no difference between mortal and venial. We believe that all unrighteousness is sin, and while we know that there is pardon for the greatest sin in the blood of Christ, we dare not promise ourselves impunity for the least, without it. Instead of trusting ourselves, therefore, with confidence to the snares of Satan, and venturing on actions of any questionable character; we act as men who are not ignorant of his devices, and who know the danger that belongs to the slightest deviation from truth. We are taught to "abhor that which is evil," however extenuated by circumstances, and however trivial in appearance. We have known that God requires the whole heart, and the whole mind; that he accepts no divided service; is satisfied by no external homage or outward form; but seeks "those to worship him, who worship him in spirit and in truth."

There are others whose views are different; who assert a distinction in the nature of sin, for which we find no authority in Scripture; and who lower its character by imagining that it is in the power of men to forgive it; who think that alms-giving may do away with iniquity, or that a satisfaction may, in

some degree, be made by man for the transgressions he has committed.

We mourn over their error. We denounce their distinctions as unscriptural and false. We can see the dishonour done to God; the wrong offered to the Saviour; the ruin of the soul, in the application of their system. We can see that the real character of sin, as an offence against God, is lost sight of by this statement. We can see that the value of the Redeemer's sacrifice is depreciated by the terms on which forgiveness is offered. We can see that the wholesome horror of sin is diminished by this representation of its character, and that the soul is encouraged to expose itself to dangers by the means of recovery which are offered. We can see all this, we can condemn the error under which they live, we can show its consequences; but what do we more than they? In what respect does our clearer knowledge, our purer faith regulate our practice? or in what degree does it raise it above theirs? Is self-denial more exercised? are the wanderings of the heart and the affections, those inlets of evil, those occasions of falling, more assiduously watched, more diligently controlled? Does the graver view we take of sin lead to more of godly vigilance against its delusions, to more of godly sorrow for its influence, among us than among others? or is not sin committed as boldly, as presumptuously committed by those who believe that the blood of Christ was shed for its forgiveness, as it is by those who think that they may purchase absolution for its commission?

Alas! why are we enlightened by the light of truth, if we are not to see the ways of truth more clearly? why are we enabled to see the deceitfulness of these distinctions which have been imagined by others, if we are not to maintain a more holy walk, a more heavenly conversation; or why are we to know more than others, if we are not to do more than they do?

But again, we believe that there is but one mediator between God and man—the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God has sent him forth to be the propiti-

ation for the sins of the whole world, so that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

There are some who deny this doctrine. There are others who, by dividing the honour of the work, extenuate and degrade it. There are some who, denying the mediatorial office of our Lord, know him only as a teacher sent from God; who, with a perverseness worse than that of Judaism, put this grace from them, and wilfully and ungratefully reject the greatest token of the love of God for man. There are others, who ascribe to our Lord only a part in the work which belongs to him. Who associate the agency of others with his, and either address him through their mediation, or imagine that their intercession is to be combined with his. The mercy of God has delivered us from these errors. In Jesus Christ we see "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the whole world." In him we delight to trace that perfect sufficiency for the work which is ascribed to him, which alone gives reasonable confidence to our faith, and makes hope an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast.

But if we thus see in Christ, what the Socinian does not see, or what the Romanist only sees imperfectly, what do we more than they? What effect has been produced on our hearts and lives by this clearer vision of the Redeemer's glories?

If we look to Christ as our only refuge from the wrath to come, where is our diligence in making our calling and election sure in him? If we believe that there is but one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, why is he not more openly confessed? If we believe that his is the only name whereby we may receive health and salvation, why are we not more zealous for the enlargement of his kingdom; why are we not labouring with greater diligence to bring others to the knowledge of the salvation that is in him? Why is it not our object, personal as well as public, to extend the influence of the gospel? Why are not the resources of this Protestant kingdom devoted to the one Redeemer's cause, and our commerce

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employed in carrying the light of truth to those nations that are yet in darkness?

If we were ignorant of that value which the soul of man derives from the gospel history; if we did not know that it was redeemed, not with corruptible things as gold and silver, but with the precious blood of Christ; if we did not thus admit as the great article of our creed, a doctrine which proves the inestimable value of the soul by the price paid for its recovery; we might be justified in our indifference to the spiritual state of others, and might say "Am I my brother's keeper?" Or, if we were satisfied by a mere external profession; if we conceived that the performance of certain forms constituted religion, and placed men in the way of salvation; we might be contented to behold our own population nominally Christian, and might take uniformity of profession as a substitute for unity of spirit. But we are raised above these errors. We have received the truth as it is in Jesus. We know that without Christ the man is lost; and that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This we have received; this we profess; but "what do we more than others?"

We hear of multitudes living without God in the world. We see our own brethren perishing from lack of knowledge. In the mean time, we know the freeness of the gospel call, the blessings that are promised, the grace that is given; we know all this, we profess to believe all this, and yet, "what do we more than others?"

But there is yet another application of the subject which the present occasion prompts, and to which I turn with still deeper feelings. We contemplate the light in which a Christian walks, the advantages he possesses in means of grace and knowledge, beyond all that was enjoyed before; and feeling the connexion, the necessary connexion, between privilege and duty, we are drawn to ask the question "what do ye more than others?"

In the case of Protestants, we see that light shining more clearly and more dis-



tinctly than on other men; we see it drawn from the source of light in the Scriptures; we see it leading to a profession more specific, and more distinctive; and arguing, as in the former case, from increase of knowledge to a clearer sense of duty, and a higher tone of practice, we are compelled to compare the standard we see in them, with that which is maintained in the world around them, and to ask again, "what do ye more than others?"

If the men who heard the preaching of John the Baptist in the wilderness were ordered to bring forth fruits meet for repentance: If the men who heard our blessed Lord were directed to deny themselves, and to take up their cross daily and follow him: If those who have been admitted into the church of Christ have promised to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil: If every increase of light shows us more of the sin there is in man, and of the holiness there is in God; and every Christian privilege comes charged with its proportion of responsibility; then, what shall become of us, who are called to minister in the word, and who have offered ourselves to others as messengers from God to man?

"Wo is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of an unclean people;" were the words of Isaiah, when he saw the Lord in his glory, and looked on himself as the messenger whom the Lord would send. Such also must be the feelings of every one who thinks of the ministry of the gospel, and contemplates himself as the instrument employed.

And yet we know, that when a live coal from the altar had been laid upon the prophet's lips, his tone was altered, his feelings were changed. The language of despair became that of confidence and hope; and he who just before recoiled from the office proposed to him, exclaimed at once, "Here am I, send me!"

And thus it is with us, my brethren. We know, that of ourselves we are not able even to think the thing that is right; and when we dwell upon the charge we

are called to fill; when we survey the nature of our office, its labours, its responsibilities; the consequences that must follow its discharge towards others, and towards ourselves; no language seems suited to the feelings of our hearts but that of the prophet, when he shrank with terror and dismay from the duty he was called to. "But our sufficiency is of God." We know that "we have this treasure in earthly vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of man;" and while we feel that his grace may be magnified in our infirmities, we dare not yield to the impression which might deter us from the work; nor refuse an office in which we may be the means of adding glory to his name.

Having believed then, we speak. Having received mercy, we faint not. A dispensation of the gospel is committed unto us. Christ must be preached; the world must be warned; and whatever may be our sense of our own unworthiness, our message, as ministers of the gospel, must be delivered, and prayers and tears must testify to the sincerity with which it is urged. And it will not be delivered in vain! We know him who hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." We remember the word which says, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world;" and while we remember that whatever be the hand which planteth, or the hand that watereth, it is God that giveth the increase; we need not doubt the success of the message, on account of the weakness of the messenger by whom it is uttered.

But let that weakness be what it may, let the consciousness of infirmity, of unfitness be what it may; if ever it happen, that that live coal from the altar, the remembrance of him who is the propitiation for our sins, be laid upon our lips, as it was upon the lips of the prophet: if it ever happen, that the words are heard by us which were heard by him; if it be said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sins purged;" if a sense of the love of God be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which

he hath given us ; what is there to check or to hinder us. The love of Christ will then constrain us ! Zeal for him who did so much for us ; gratitude to him who suffered so much for us ; will overcome every other feeling. We shall rejoice in the privilege of confessing him before men ; and like the apostles, we shall give with great power our witness of the Lord Jesus. Let us look then from ourselves, where there is so much to dishearten, so much to dispirit ; and let every eye be fixed on him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Let us think little of what we may be able to do for him, but think much of what he has done for us. Let us lose sight of our own insufficiency in considering the largeness of his mercy, the greatness of his power ; and while we thus give ourselves to him who calls us ; though we be the least of all saints, yet to us may be the grace given, to preach to others the unsearchable riches of Christ.

#### BENEFIT OF A RELIGIOUS TRACT.

At an Auxiliary Tract Society held in the neighbourhood of London, the following interesting anecdote was narrated by the Rev. Edward Parsons :—

“A member of parliament, now entered into his rest, was in the habit of appropriating the early hours of the Sabbath to the distribution of these little messengers of mercy. On one occasion, as he called at a house which he had visited for the purpose of leaving a tract, he was told by an elderly female, whom he had before seen at this habitation of misery, that a young man up-stairs wished to see him. He was introduced accordingly to a room at the top of the house, where he found the young man stretched on a bed of sickness. After some conversation with him respecting the state of his mind,

he ascertained that he was the son of a highly respectable and pious individual ; and that he had left the paternal roof in order to avoid restraint. A course of licentiousness had brought him to the borders of the grave, and he was now anxious, having obtained the pardon of his Maker, to secure the forgiveness of his father. The gentleman went, according to the directions of the invalid, to the father, and introduced his business with him in the following manner : “You have a son I believe, sir.”—“Mention him not to me,” said the dejected father ; “he has been for a long time my grief, and shame, and sorrow : he will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.”—“I have seen him,” said the gentleman. “When ?” inquired the father, anxiously. “A very short time since,” replied the gentleman ; “he is penitent for his conduct, and his only wish is to obtain your pardon.” They hastened together to the house where the wanderer had found a resting-place. When the door was opened, the sufferer lifted up his head, and as he perceived his father, his eye glistened with the hope of regaining his favour, and his tongue ejaculated the desire of his heart. The event proved that his hope was not fallacious, nor his plea for forgiveness in vain. The father ran, like the parent of the prodigal son, to embrace his long-despaired of but repenting child. The son again repeated his hope that he might, in addition to the pardon of the Almighty through a crucified Redeemer, receive the forgiveness of his parent ; this request was immediately granted, and they both wept together. The feeble constitution of the young man, however, was not able to bear so much excitement ; he fell from the embrace of his aged parent, and then once more lifting his eyes to heaven, he closed them again, and expired.

## SERMON XLIX.

### THE LEPERS OF SAMARIA.

BY THE REV. J. SHERMAN,

IN BEHALF OF HOME MISSIONS.

*"Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household."—2 Kings vii. 9.*

THE circumstances which dictated this brief conversation were the following.—Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, with a numerous army, had besieged Samaria, the capital of the kingdom of Israel. It appears that the siege was continued so long, and under such distressing circumstances, that the most awful consequences began to rage in the city. Such was the high price of all kinds of provisions, that as much as ten pounds were given for an ass's head, unwholesome, unsavoury food; and a pint of corn, taken from the crops of doves collected from the neighbouring country, was sold at the rate of twelve shillings a pint. Hunger had so blunted the sympathies of nature, that mothers had killed and eaten their own children; and the resources of the city were now in such a dreadfully exhausted state, that an entire surrender, or total destruction, must be the necessary sad consequences.

Jehoram, instead of reproving himself for his own wickedness, and confessing to himself privately that he was the great cause of all the miseries which Samaria was now enduring, laid the fault upon Elisha, the most patriotic friend the country had; and he determined, therefore, to kill him. For this purpose he went to his house; and previous to the execution of that purpose he determined to hear the prophet for himself. Uttering some impious, abominable, and blasphemous expression, he was induced to

delay his design till the next morning, on account of a prophecy which Elisha delivered, contained in the first two verses of this chapter. "Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord, To-morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria. Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof."

In the afternoon of the same day four leprous men suggested to one another the expedient of going out to the camp of the Syrians, and seeing what had become of the army, or what was the state of the Syrian's force. They were outcasts from society; they were devoured by the leprosy; they were under the ban and curse of God and man: and therefore any thing that happened to them, they thought, could not make them worse. And, therefore, "they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? If we say, we will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live;

and if they kill us, we shall but die." As soon as it began to grow dark they commenced their operations, proceeding on their journey; and, to their great astonishment, when they arrived at the camp, they found no man there: for the Lord had gone out before them, and caused the Syrians "to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said"—that is the Syrians—"one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life." When they had satisfied themselves, by going to the extreme end of the camp, that it was not a stratagem of the enemy, they then went, first into one tent, and partook of the luxuries of life that the Syrians had left behind; and entered another, and took of the gold and silver, and concealed it in the earth. And after they had thus satisfied themselves, they began to think of their friends: "We have been into the Syrians' camp, and we have now got their money, and we have had their food; our spirits are refreshed, and our bodies are nourished, by that of which we have partaken; but there are our poor brethren in the city; there are our wives, and our children there, and there are vast numbers there dying of hunger. We do not well to sit here: this day is a day of good tidings; we have reaped the advantage of coming out; we have partaken of the bounty of God in this extraordinary way: if we tarry until the morning light, and be so ungrateful to divine Providence for the blessings that are conferred upon us, some mischief will befall us. Come, let us rise up and go into the city, and tell the king's household the good things of which we have partaken."

My Christian brethren, the present state of the world is, in a spiritual sense, somewhat similar to that in which Samaria was placed when these lepers uttered these words. The armies of Satan and of sin surround it; the people, by

millions, are perishing for lack of knowledge: God has blessed a variety of individuals, by his rich providence, with a foretaste of the rich provision of grace and mercy, which makes happiness abound on earth, and fits souls for everlasting glory. Thousands are every day perishing for lack of knowledge; and millions more must perish, if the bread of life be not sent. Now we, like the favoured lepers, have found out a plentiful supply to enrich ourselves, and feast the world. Thanks be to God that some few efforts have been made to supply the world with this provision! But their wants are infinitely beyond all the supplies we have sent them. Millions are crying, and are praying for this bread of life: and not only millions of the *heathen*, whose case is constantly presented to our view, but millions of *our own brethren*, in villages, and hamlets, and towns of your own country, with your own blood running in their veins, where many of your relatives dwell; where some of you have friends, servants, children, relations residing. And these dark parts of the earth, though not like the habitations of cruelty in the heathen world, are yet full of vice, and misery, and ignorance, to almost an abounding extent: and the object of my standing before you this evening, is to "provoke you to love and to good works;" and to endeavour to "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance," to exhort you to "add to your faith virtue," and to your virtue still greater liberality than you have been accustomed to show to this great and necessitous cause which now presents its claims to your notice. And may I especially, in entering upon the subject this evening, beg the prayers of this congregation, that I may be so assisted in laying its claims before you, that your hearts may be opened and expanded, and Christ's name be honoured and glorified this evening.

The text, then, describes the times in which we live: "This day is a day of good tidings." The text reproves our indifference to the miseries of others: "We do not well." The text pronounces our punishment if we delay to send them help

And the text suggests the method which we ought immediately to pursue.

First, then, the text describes **THE TIMES IN WHICH WE LIVE**. "This day is a day of good tidings."

And is it not, my dear brethren and sisters, a day of good tidings? What are the peculiarities of the day in which we are called to live? There are these four peculiarities in it; the first of which I will now mention:—that *Jesus Christ has obtained a complete conquest over all our enemies*. And this is the great and especial truth which is published in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Sin, and the world, and Satan, like a mighty army, with all their leagued friends, were arrayed against us. The justice of God which we had offended, appeared in dreadful majesty against us; and until satisfaction was made to divine justice, mercy itself could not spare or pardon. The wrath of God was revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and all unrighteousness of men; and all our sad expectation consisted in tribulation and anguish, misery and woe, which were ready to fall upon our heads. Now we had to engage these hosts; we had to go out against them, these armies which surrounded us as they did Samaria. We had no champion, we had no individual who could protect our cause; no army went out against them. Like Samaria, beloved, when we beheld our condition, we were all alarm and all dismay: and, as in the case of Samaria, the victory was wholly of heaven, so it is in our case: Jesus, from the height of the throne of his majesty, beheld us; pity moved him to compassionate our case; love, which had heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths, unknown, and which passeth knowledge, brought him from heaven to earth in our flesh. In that flesh he dwelt for thirty-three years in our world, in the form of a servant; and, as the Captain of our salvation, single-handed and alone, he entered the bloody field; and sin and hell opposed all its force against him. The wrath of God seized and fell upon him in all its awful majesty: justice demanded of him the debt which we had contracted; and the law poured forth all its

curse upon his head. He engaged in the mighty conflict: and, as smoke is driven away, so he drove them away. Our God arose, and he scattered all his enemies. It is true that Christ in this conflict died; but in dying he "destroyed death, and him that had the power of death, and delivered us, who through fear of death were all our lifetime subject to bondage." It is true that he died; but in dying he "put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself." It is true that he died; but he proclaimed the victory with his dying breath—"It is finished." "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." It is true, friends, that he died;

"But justice quenched its flaming sword  
In Jesus' vital blood;"

and the law was magnified, justice was satisfied, God was well pleased, and sinners were saved. And now the host of heaven and the church of Christ may sing "Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah! the work is done; the conquest is made, salvation is brought in; and the blessings which were so much needed for my soul, are all ready to be procured, to be bestowed, through his dying atonement." So that "this is a day of good tidings."

Moreover, "this is a day of good tidings" because *Jesus Christ has procured an ample provision for all our necessities*. The *spoil* is ours; the *glory* is his. The conquest was made by himself, and through that conquest all the benefits of salvation are now amply provided and amply presented to our use. And what are these blessings? My brethren, our enemies had robbed us of peace, of joy, of communion, of justification, of holiness, and of heaven: but this day is "a day of good tidings;" Jesus Christ has restored that which he took not away. Whatever scarlet and crimson sins have been committed, in the gospel he has presented a full, and free, and everlasting pardon. If pride, and passion, and prejudice had corrupted the soul, and become its grief, in the gospel is presented a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. If condemnation arise from the law, to terrify the spirit that knows not how to justify himself before God, Christ

in the gospel has presented him with a righteousness that is "unto all and upon all them that believe;" for there is no difference. If hostility to God and his service be the plague of the man's heart, and oppose the message he constantly hears, Christ has brought and has preached tranquillity; for "we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord." If heaven be desirable, and its glories be coveted, and the hope of attaining it be lost to any spirit here, "this is a day of good tidings," my hearers, for the way to the holiest of all is made manifest, through the rent veil of the Redeemer's flesh. Beloved, the gospel is a table spread, where all the spiritual wants of sinners may be supplied: here, in abundance, are found the bread of life, the water of life, the fruits of the tree of life, and all other blessings connected with life eternal. And may I ask this vast congregation this evening, Have you, dear hearers, satisfied yourselves at this table? Is there any unconverted spirit here, who, yet convicted of its own guilt, is earnestly desirous of the blessings which the gospel imparts? This is a *Home Missionary Society*; and we are about to plead for *home*; and where can I better plead than here, dear hearers, and tell you the gospel is for you, and the blessings of the gospel are for you, and the ample provisions of boundless grace do invite you, do welcome you, to come and partake of them largely?

"O all ye hungry, starving poor,  
Behold the royal feast,  
And let your longing appetites  
The rich provision taste."

"This day is a day of good tidings:" I am sent on a message from the bountiful Provider of this feast: "Come, for all things are now ready." See, my dear hearers, the Master is at the table; the provisions are spread; the guests are seated; but Mary's place is empty; Lazarus is not one of them that sit at the table with him; John is not yet amongst his disciples. Have not you, my young friends, who hear me this evening, been the burden of your mother's prayers and hopes, and your father's expectations for

years that are past? Come to this blessed provision; this is "a day of good tidings" for you; when you are heartily welcome to all the boundless grace of the great Provider.

But there is another point connected with this good tidings, and that is this: that *Jesus Christ has led many of us who are present to participate in the provisions of his love*. And this makes it "a day of good tidings" to us. Blessed for ever be his holy name, that not a few of us have tasted that he is gracious, and that we can put our hands to our heart, and say that the ample provisions of his love have not only satisfied, but done more for us than we could ask or think. We take up the language of Scripture: we delight to know that "we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." We know that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." "We know whom we have believed, and are persuaded that he is able to keep that which we have committed unto him against that day." "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ." We know that his "flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed." We "know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich." "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Now how came we in this happy state? How came we feelingly and experimentally to know these heavenly truths? O "not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake."

Beloved, the four leprous men exemplify our condition. Like them, we were cast out of the congregation of the saints: like them, we were loathsome in our own eyes: like them, we were infectious to our neighbours: like them, we were under the ban and curse of God; but, like these leprous men, he filled us with

views of our own misery, made us discontented with the state in which we were, raised a spark of hope in our bosoms, that for us there might be hope, and that we might, as we could not be in a worse condition, be better, by application to his mercy and grace. And you who hear me this evening, recollect that the day in which we live must necessarily be "a day of good tidings." Who brought you to London? Who placed you in such a situation? Who fixed you, young man, in that counting-house, where the first sermon you heard should be made evidently the power of God to your salvation? O methinks I see your mother taking her last farewell of you; and as you went away from the door, she lifted up her voice and said, "God bless thee, my son, and make the God of thy father the God of thy life." And God has answered that prayer; and this is "a day of good tidings" to you. O it was he who, by the operation of his Spirit, applied divinely to your heart: it was he who brought you to listen to its voice: it was he who ordered the visit of that friend; who put that book into your hand; who suggested the visit to such a house, or such a family, or such a temple for his worship, and there made the gospel instrumental to your everlasting good.

Now, I say, behold the change; you who were once leprous souls are become rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom: you are satisfied with marrow and fatness; and your mouth praises him with joyful lips: you who were afar off are brought nigh by the blood of Jesus Christ: and though the day may be distant, yet cleansed, exalted, justified, and glorified, you shall one day arise to the place where he is, and see him, and be like him, and be with him, and shall change your lamentations for hallelujahs, your pilgrim's staff for the palm-branch of victory, and all your distresses for everlasting pleasures. "O "this day is a day of good tidings." "Bless the Lord, O our souls, and all that is within us bless his holy name."

But, my brethren, there is another point connected with the day in which

we live—that *Jesus Christ has opened channels for the publication of these good tidings to others.* This day may be emphatically called, indeed, "a day of good tidings." Will you indulge me, my dear hearers, by reflecting a moment on the contrast of this day and the days that have preceded us; and let us see whether this day be not "a day of good tidings." Formerly the Scriptures were not completed; now the canon of inspiration is closed. Formerly the Scriptures were not translated; now we have the Bible, not only closed as it respects the canon, but we have it translated in our own and numbers of other languages. Formerly the saints looked forward for a Saviour to come; we behold him arrived: for an atonement to be made; we behold it finished: for a righteousness to be wrought out; we behold it brought in. Formerly, my brethren, what impediments had the primitive disciples, in the publication of the gospel, in the governments under which they lived; our government, blessed be God, if it does not patronize, does not oppose; and under the sanction of this government we can carry our gospel every where. Formerly, wherever it was preached, the exertions of our brethren were always impeded by desolation and war; but now we are at peace; there is no port shut against us; missionaries may be sent to every place.

At this time God seems to be going forth, and shaking the very nations, stirring up the minds of men to an earnest desire for happiness; a certain *something* they feel they want, a general buzz and cry over the whole world for a certain *something*; and although individuals may not know exactly what they want, yet there is a certain anxiety for the way that leads them to glory, happiness, and eternal life, which the gospel so amply supplies. Now they are throwing off the shackles under which they are groaning, and are crying for Christ and the gospel. Twenty years ago the public press was the vehicle of slander against the saints, and against the Bible, and against Christ; but now newspapers, with very few exceptions, are constrained to be the public and avowed advocates of the kingdom of

'Christ. The Missionary Society—I mean the London Missionary Society—the Bible Society, and the Tract Society, and others, which were begun with a handful of praying men in Mr. Hardcastle's counting-house, and rose in the world by little and little, like the cloud that the prophet saw, now rise majestically, like the sun, and are scattering light, salvation, joy, and peace over the whole world. Again, the petty jealousies and distinctions amongst Christians, which so hindered and impeded the work of conversion, are wonderfully softened down, so that they now seem to vie with each other who can do the most good, and who can most extend the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. In our own land light is spreading in every direction. The pulpits of the established church, which many years ago were not so filled as they now are, now we see are filling in every direction with wise, holy, zealous, devoted, and powerful men. The population of our country, which was formerly sunk in the grossness of ignorance and darkness, are now—with some exceptions which we shall afterwards show—are now placed in those situations by which they can attain to the knowledge of the truth, in hundreds of public places, from the servants of Christ. God is putting it into the hearts of wealthy men to erect places of worship. One in your own city has built perhaps as many as eleven or twelve; another has built one at Bristol: one is built at Weston-super-mare: and churches, too, without parliamentary grants, are erected by the munificence of individuals in various parts of the world, and the glorious gospel of the blessed God is preached in these places. Notwithstanding the difficulties connected with all these things, we see that God is making this "a day of good tidings," by opening channels, and granting facilities for the publication of his truth, which unquestionably never existed before. The days of the Countess of Huntingdon are in some respects revived again. She, from her own hearty desire, and love for the spread of the gospel of Jesus, would now sell her jewels for the sake of building a chapel; and

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now strip her house at Ashby-de-la-Zouch of its furniture, in order that another house of God might be erected in another part, and the salvation of the gospel of God made known to the sons of men.

My dear hearers, let it also be remembered that, notwithstanding the difficulties, and the sacrifices, and the distresses connected now with home and foreign labours, God is raising up both his servants and handmaidens, very willingly and joyfully to take this work. I cannot but also look at the immense improvement in our own land, as indicative of God's favour in this day. When Mr. Rowland Hill first commenced his exertions in country places, how different was the spirit and temper of the times. When he first went forth to preach the gospel at Devizes, he told me that two individuals endeavoured to waylay him, and with an oath swore he should not preach the sermon that evening, and that they would take away his life: some singular circumstance attended his emancipation from their grasp. Persecution has ceased to a very great extent, and God is giving facilities in every direction for the publication of his truth. There is hardly, perhaps, a village or town in the whole kingdom where the gospel cannot, at this present time, make its way. These are facilities which we could not have expected or dreamed of thirty years ago.

And then, brethren, may I not say that, notwithstanding the difficulties of the times, and the pressure of the times upon various individuals, yet is it not a marvellous thing, connected with the present day, that the subscriptions to the various societies increase; and, above all, that a greater spirit of prayer for the outpouring of the divine influence on the churches, and all the exertions connected with missionary and home labours, connected with the great work of God, should be more amply excited among the churches, is evidently a token for good! This day is indeed "a day of good tidings." I bless God I was not born a century back; I thank God I have lived to see 1835; for it is "a day of good tidings." It warms and cheers our hearts to see God going

2 P 2



out before us, causing a noise in the camp, and making the enemy fall before us, and making way for his servants to penetrate the dark recesses of the earth, and claim his people for himself.

I pass on, in the second place to notice that THE TEXT REPROVES OUR INDIFFERENCE TO THE MISERIES OF OTHERS. "We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings." This may appear a very strange connexion with the foregoing statements that I have made, brethren: but a very little explanation will, perhaps, alter your opinion. It is true that the Lord Jesus has graciously opened channels, and given facilities for the publication of his gospel: but, beloved, is it equally true that we have embraced them? Will you allow me to put this question very seriously, beloved, to your consciences, and to my own conscience, this evening? Has the Lord Jesus gone out before us, and granted facilities for the publication of his truth, and have we embraced them? Have we seized these openings? Have we, as he has opened, entered into the breach, planted the standard, and claimed the territory for him? No: in many cases this has not been done. Alas! my brethren, if every conscience brings the subject to bear upon itself, and proposes these questions to itself—"Have I seized the efficiencies which Christ has offered me to make known the bounties of his love to my kindred, to my neighbours, and to the world?" each of us must be condemned to-night. "Have I made any sacrifice commensurate with the object, or equal to the prospect that was open before me? Have I made Christ's kingdom my first, my earnest, my prime request?" Alas, brethren! we are all condemned. What have we endured, compared with Christ's sufferings for us? What have we given that we could not well spare? What have we ever made of sacrifice for the service of the Lord Jesus Christ? Beloved, we are all in the same condemnation; we are all convicted and condemned. We have satisfied ourselves with the precious provision of the gospel; but, to a great extent, we have forgotten our perishing brethren. We have tasted, alas! the ease, and the

comforts, and the luxuries of our own personal enjoyments, without remembering that our brethren were perishing for lack of knowledge.

Certainly, then, "we do not well." For, first, let it be remembered that *while this disposition exists in the mind, we dishonour our character*. What is our character? If we have believed in Christ, we are the sons of God; we are united to Christ, our elder brother, and we are under infinite obligations to his boundless love, inexpressible obligations to his gracious care and love to us. Now all he asks us, in return for his love to us, is to love him in return—not to be ashamed of him; to establish his kingdom, and to give ourselves up to his service. And who would think the terms hard that knew the blessedness of this Master's service? Who would even think that this proposition were too much to request of souls so deeply indebted to his love and to his mercy? To us, and to us only, he has deputed the honour of instrumentally bringing home to his fold our kindred and our countrymen. Beloved, our vows are upon us: we have opened our mouths to the Lord, and we cannot go back. All those of us who are accustomed to visit the table of the Lord, remember our vows there. How oft our hearts have been deeply impressed with the love of the Lord Jesus, and we have said, as we have departed from his house, "I am the Lord's: my time is his; my talents are his; my property is his; all that I have is his: my Beloved is mine, and I am his." And our prayers witness against us as much as our vows. We have said, "Thy kingdom come;" and did we mean it? Did we mean that his kingdom should come when we so said? Yes, we meant that his kingdom should come; but without any great sacrifice on our part: or else we have slighted our prayer. If we withhold our persons, if we withhold our property, if we refuse to establish his kingdom in the earth, let us relinquish the name of Christian; it does not belong to us.

But, secondly, we not only dishonour our character, but *we disobey Christ's command*. Our prayers have been, "Lead

me into thy truth, and teach me, for thou art the God of my salvation:" "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" has been our cry. Now this is his instruction: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, beginning at Jerusalem." Go tell the world my love, but begin at Jerusalem; begin at your own homes; begin where the people shed my precious blood; begin where the man lives that nailed me to the tree; begin where the soldier resides that pierced my side: let the virtue of my cross, and its salvation, be seen by those who were my murderers and my foes: that is, begin at Jerusalem, begin at home.

Now this is not an arbitrary command of the Eternal, my brethren, but a very necessary answer to your prayers, to your most earnest wish. You have prayed that his kingdom may come; and now he is opening his way, that his kingdom may come, for you to embrace the opportunities that will be the means of establishing that kingdom in the world. It is the very work in which you delight, according to your own profession in your best moments at the footstool of divine mercy, that you have earnestly desired every thing that has now happened; and then you have sung that hymn—

"Now will I tell to sinners round,  
What a dear Saviour I have found,  
I'll point to his redeeming blood,  
And say, Behold the way to God."

All this was perfectly sincere at the time; but it must be carried out to prove its sincerity. The command is our warrant; the promise is our encouragement: and if we live in disobedience to Christ's commands, how can we expect his blessing? "We do not well:" the text reproves our indifference. If our hearts say, we are too weak and unworthy to be engaged in the work, then I hear him saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is perfected in thy weakness." "By me," says the leper, "he saved Samaria;" and "by me" the little captive maid, in her master's kitchen, was the means of saving her master's soul, and healing her master's body.

"By me" the fishermen and tax-gatherer converted thousands. And it is his pleasure still to choose the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, and the weak things of the world to bring to naught the things that are. Let, therefore, no hearts be discouraged in their village exertions, in their visitations around their districts, either with tracts, or with the opportunity in society round us—our friends, our neighbours, and the poor too, in speaking for Jesus Christ. You may not speak so eloquently as an Apollos; but if you can say one word for your Master, for the Prophet that is in Israel, as the little captive maid did; who can tell but that God may give that word an efficacy and blessing, which the greatest efforts without his blessing would not effect?

There are especial and great encouragements resulting from such a thought as this, to an extended exertion. Where shall we find men for the purpose? This is the great, the last, the only question that we should ever propose to ourselves. The great question that commends itself to our especial notice is, What has Christ commanded? What is the work he would have us do? We are to go and labour, and leave the rest to him. Success is not ours; *labour* is ours. He has the gold and the silver in his possession; and as he raises up friends for different institutions, he manifestly proves that he has the hearts of all in his hands. O, dear Christian friends, there is a branch of liberality I want to see extended. I think I may say that many of the Christian friends of the church "do not well." How many rich members have we, to whom it would be no sacrifice each to support a missionary? Christ's command is, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." "Why," says the rich and wealthy professor, the member of the Christian church, "I cannot go." True, but then you can go by deputy; and why not have your deputy in a heathen land? Why not have your deputy at home? Why not have him circulating the knowledge of the gospel around your city; in the village where you were born, and

perpetuate the memory of Jesus Christ there, in the very place where you yourself cannot go? May I beg to press this upon the attention of Christians? How much more noble, how much more durable the monument would thus be after the decease of the individual, to have a man of God publishing Christ's salvation in the spot where, perhaps, that person was brought up—in poverty, perhaps, brought up; but who came to this great city, or went to other places, and God blessed him, and caused his riches to increase: how much better would it be to have a monument inscribing his name, and telling of deeds that few, perhaps, ever saw.

But I pass on to notice, in the next place, that the TEXT PRONOUNCES OUR PUNISHMENT IF WE DELAY. "If we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will befall us." I will not detain you, my beloved, long in proving a point which I believe you will all subscribe, that some mischief will certainly fall on the heads of those who, knowing their duty, do not fulfil it. It is not doubtful, it is not chimerical: but it is plain, and certain, and awful. Yet I cannot suffer this opportunity to escape, brethren, without stirring up your minds by way of remembrance. Let me just therefore remark that the Scriptures assure us, if we delay, three things shall befall us: first, our eyes shall see the destruction of our kindred; secondly, our souls shall want the joys of God's salvation; and thirdly, our conduct shall receive the condemnation of Christ.

If we delay this *work our eyes shall see the destruction of our kindred*. When our beloved Lord had used all efforts to evangelize Jerusalem, by preaching, by miracles, by residing amongst them, by various conversations, and yet, after all, their misery affected his heart; he could not look upon them without tears. Many times he wept in his prayers; but there are two scenes only recorded where he *publicly* wept: the one was at the grave of Lazarus, his dear friend; and the other was when he looked over Jerusalem, and saw the people perishing—people who had discarded the prophets that

had been sent them. Now what should our grief, beloved, be to see souls brought every hour to the brink of hell, and know that, if they die, they must fall therein, and to reflect that we have used no adequate means to succour and save their souls! Do you believe it, my brethren, that there are *five millions* of your own countrymen, who either have not the means to attend public worship—that is, there are not places of worship for them to attend—or else they are not in the habit of hearing the gospel at all? Do you believe that fact? If you do, I will tell you this: that, supposing thirty years to be the duration of one generation, then there are *one hundred and sixty-six thousand* of your own countrymen dying without Christ every year; and there are *four hundred and fifty* of your own countrymen dying every day without the knowledge of Christ and his salvation! This is an appalling fact, my dear brethren; but can you look calmly and coldly on this, O ye that love Christ? Is it a matter of indifference that these individuals should pass into eternity, without any effort on your part to pluck them as brands from the burning? Esther felt when the decree was issued against her countrymen; and she sighed and mourned over it; and she said, "How can I endure to see the evil that shall come upon my people? How can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?" And cannot you say the same?

There is, however, another point to consider. The evil that shall befall us shall be this—*our souls shall want the joys of God's salvation*. And tell me, my dear brethren, let your consciences speak to yourselves candidly this evening, what have you ever lost by obedience to Jesus Christ? Begin your calculation in his house this evening. When have you denied yourself any of the luxuries of life, and perhaps a few of its comforts? When have you unflinchingly taken up your cross in obedience to his commands? When have you made the greatest sacrifices to his cause, and endeavoured to follow out all his commands? I ask, Has he not repaid you with his "favour, which is better than life," and made you

cup overflow with spiritual blessings? Has he not? And when you have neglected his cause, and put earth first and heaven last; when you have cherished the luxuries and comforts of life in your heart, instead of Christ's cause and his service; when you have put self above Christ, and held the salvation of your souls indifferent, thinking of your business, of your activity in life, or of your family, or of your neighbourhood, or of your honour—have not the chariot wheels of devotedness and duty dragged very heavily? Have you found communion with Christ so sweet then as formerly, when your first love burned on the altar of your heart? Have you not found the ordinances of God without that refreshment which you previously had? Have you not walked in darkness, and had no light? I put it thus, beloved, to your consciences, seriously and affectionately, this evening, whether that passage is not true—"He that knoweth my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and I will love him, and my Father will love him; and we will come and make our abode with him." All our consciences testify, brethren, that this is true: and therefore this mischief shall befall us—that, if we act not up to our convictions of the pressing duties which are claiming our attention in Christ's cause, our souls shall want the joys of God's salvation.

Again: *our conduct shall receive the condemnation of Christ.* I refer now to the last day. That is so plainly spoken of, that it needs no illustration: "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." But I now advert to the state of mind which indifference to Christ's cause brings; and to the dishonour which even now it casts upon God. The inhabitants of Meroz did not help the *enemy*; they did not *oppose* the enemy; but they stayed at home: while their brethren were engaged in war, and were going out against the enemy, they quietly looked on. There was no opposition, there was nothing directly opposite in their conduct. No; they indifferently looked at the war; they neither sent supplies of money nor treasures into

the camp; and their oppressed brethren might fight their own wars, and endure their own perils for them. And what was the consequence? A voice from heaven said, "Curse ye Meroz; curse ye bitterly the inhabitants of Meroz; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." They were not opponents; but our Lord has stated precisely in the same terms—"He that is not with me is against me." Neutrality, beloved, is here quite impossible: we are one thing or the other; we are Christians, or we are enemies to Christ.

Let us, therefore, see, brethren, that we live up to these privileges. And the apostle explains, in another case, the kind of punishment such individuals often receive: "Receiving in themselves the recompense of their error, which was meet." They "received in themselves the recompense of their error, which was meet." Can there be a greater punishment than to be given up to an indifferent, covetous, hardened state of mind? O, to have it said to a man, "Let him alone," must, of all the terrors which God can pour upon an individual on this side hell, be the worst. See it exemplified in Judas; see it exemplified in Saul; see it exemplified in Demas. Let us dread the brink of such a precipice, the approach to such a fearful state as this. "From all hardness of heart towards our suffering, miserable brethren, good Lord deliver us."

But, beloved, we hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. Your very presence here this evening intimates a contrary spirit. You have come, it is true, with the earnest desire to hear what might be said, relative to the various openings which are about to be made, or which are making, or which are already made, for the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In many cases, perhaps, the want of the knowledge has been the result of the want of liberality on your part. The subject, perhaps, has not been sufficiently presented before you, and you have not therefore thought of it. You are saying this evening, "Jesus,

what shall I do to show how much I love thy charming name?" The text would, in the last place, suggest **THE CONDUCT WHICH YOU OUGHT TO ADOPT UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES.** "Let us go," the text says, "and tell the king's household." And, brethren, let us go and carry the gospel to our poor brethren and sisters in England that are perishing for lack of knowledge. Beloved, our brethren are perishing; and will you be kind enough this evening to look steadfastly at their condition. I do not wish you to look merely at the exterior; their drunkenness, and their vices, and their prodigality, are, perhaps, very distressing: but I wish you to look further than these things; I wish you to look at the *cause* of all this: and the cause of all this is, that they are without God, and they are without Christ, and they are without hope in the world. If they would go, as they should go, to Christ, the cause of all their evils would instantly be banished. They are famishing not for bread made of the finest of the wheat; our flax, our wool, and our wine they want not: and if they were dying of famine, if they had but Christ's love in their hearts, why famine would only be a nearer road to immortality: it would be like going across the field, instead of going the long way round by the road. But they are perishing for lack of the bread of life; are dying for want of the water of life; are thirsting for pardon, and they know not where it is to be had. And though some of them, perhaps, reject it; and when your missionaries go to their doors, and say, "We come to tell you about the Saviour," they say, "We do not want to hear it; we want neither you nor your doctrine:" will you say, "Let them alone in their ignorance?" That be far from you. Look at that maniac: does he ask you to come and help him? Does he beg you to take off his fetters? Does he say, "Set me at liberty?" No: he dances in his chains; he calls his fetters his ornaments; he looks out of the window of his cell, and he talks about his inheritance; he lifts up his walking-stick, and tells you it is a sceptre; he points to the seat on which he sits, and

tells you it is his throne. Do you pity him the less because he is under a delusion; because he is ignorant? O no; the very circumstances of the poor maniac awaken your tender sympathies, and you pour over him, on account of his ignorance and his delusion, your warmest and most tender feelings. I have sometimes been at a funeral, where the dear infants have lost their dearest earthly relation—their tender mother; and I have seen them pleased with their black clothes, and playing with them, and running about the room with apparent delight that they had got these new habiliments: and many a sigh from the company present had issued from the mouth as they said, "Ah, dear little children! you do not know what you have lost." Do you pity them the less because they are ignorant, because they do not know the value of the person they have lost? No: you sympathize with them, and pour out your souls in prayer for them.

And this is the very case with our countrymen; many of them reject the truth, and despise the truth: and that very consideration should awaken the tenderest sympathies of your heart, to send them more fully the gospel of our God. O beloved, they are perishing; they are perishing for lack of knowledge; and that should awaken your sympathy. Why, you have sixty agents in your work; and you have four hundred villages; and you have about thirteen thousand hearers; and you have four thousand Sabbath-school children. I bless God that you have: but when you think that there are many villages, and many stations, where, for the compass of twenty miles round that station, it is impossible to hear the word of life preached, let it awaken your sympathies, and your earnest desires, and your liberality too, to send them the gospel. O let us tell them that the victory is gained; that the pardon is offered, that salvation is presented, and that Christ bids every sinner come and partake of the bounties of his love and his salvation for ever. So shall you have, dear hearers, "the blessing of them that were ready to perish" come upon you.

It suggests, in the second place, that *we should go and tell of these glad tidings, because success is certain.* Success is certain. What though many of your dear missionaries, who toil night and day in the work, have not had the extended encouragement of their heart's desire which you could wish—will you give up? Brethren, the London Missionary Society spread the table of the gospel, with all its provisions, for fifteen years in Otaheite, and not one soul was converted by the preaching of the gospel, as was known to the missionaries, during that time. But the day of Christ's power was to come: lo, a nation, as it were, was born in a day: a revival took place; God came down, dispersed all the mists of darkness, and pointed the sinners' conscience to the salvation. "He must increase:" not only his kingdom shall come; but he must increase: "he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied:" he "will pour out his Spirit upon all flesh, and all flesh shall see the salvation of our God." If we had been entirely defeated in this cause, defeat in this would be better than success in any other. But we are not defeated. It is true that now and then a little drop of divine influence descends on the congregation, and our brother is pricked to the heart; and our sister feels the power of the truth; and our mother is awakened to seriousness; and our father comes home with conviction on his conscience; and our neighbour is alarmed for his state. But presently a greater work than this shall be seen: when the Spirit of God shall be poured out from on high, then numbers shall wake and cry out, "What must we do to be saved?" Brethren, your heavenly Leader has gone up before you: he has taken all the principal places, all the forts and towers of the enemy; and he bids you, "Follow me:" he says, "There is much land yet to be possessed;" and he calls on you, and says, "Why are ye slack to go and partake of this land; why are ye slack? Why do ye not go up and plant the stand-

ard of the cross upon the soil, and claim it for me?" Why, because our hearts are cold; and because our souls do not listen to the glorious tidings of the conquests of that Saviour, which are now to be presented upon the earth.

Dear hearers, when you think, then, that success is certain, that every guinea you give to the cause of God shall be, as it were, a seed dropped—the very mite given into the treasury, shall go towards furnishing the gospel of God to the poor and the miserable among your own countrymen—whilst you think Christ has bound himself, by oath and promise, to bless every effort made; let this stimulate you again to renew your efforts, again to desire that the glory of the Lord may be revealed, that all your kindred may see his gospel.

Finally, brethren, let us furnish this gospel to our countrymen, for *our opportunities are vanishing.* Time is hastening on; health is inconstant; the fashion of the world passeth away. This, *this* is the only time we can use our strength, and talents, and time, and money. Give, therefore, this evening, as if this were the last act of your lives; as if you were about to stand at the bar of Jesus Christ, and to be judged for the deeds done in the body. Let the truths that you have heard impress your mind: and now, at the cry of this one hundred and sixty thousand who are annually dying, and of the five millions who are without the gospel, and the four hundred and fifty daily who are waking in eternity without God and without hope; now, while their cry is ringing in your ears, and while the Spirit of God is speaking through his word, now arm yourselves against all selfishness, and against all covetousness, and let the love of Christ take an entire hold of your spirit, while you say,

"Awake, my dormant zeal; for ever flame  
With generous ardour for immortal souls:  
And thou my head, and heart, and hands, and  
all,  
Spend and be spent in service so divine."

## SERMON L.

### THE MORAL INFLUENCE WE EXERT AFTER DEATH.

BY THE REV. J. CUMMING, A.M.\*

*"He being dead yet speaketh."*—Heb. xi. 4.

THERE can be no question that the text, in its primary import, refers to the faith and accepted sacrifice of Abel; and that the Holy Spirit conveys the important truth, that the departed son of Eve proclaims a useful and healthful lesson, even from the chambers of the tomb—namely, that the blood of Jesus our sacrifice is the ground of all our hopes and acceptance, and that by him alone, as the living way, is there access to the Father. But we may fairly depart from the personal and specific idea involved in the text, and present it as one of those general and great principles which have a bearing on all—a lesson to the living, and a truth concerning the dead. Every son of man, as well as Abel, "being dead yet speaketh." Every man that plays a part in the great drama of human life, leaves, at his departure, an impress and an influence, more or less extensive and lasting. The grave of the peasant and the mausoleum of the prince, are alike vocal. The sepulchral vault in which the scion of royalty was laid the other day, as well as the cold, wet, opening of the earth in which the way-side beggar was buried, utters audible and actuating oratory. From every one of the dead a voice is heard, in some circle of the world's inhabitants, which the knell of their departure does not drown—which the earth and the green sod do not muffle—which neither deafness, nor distance, nor anything that man may devise, can possibly extinguish.

\*Occasioned by the death of the Rev. Edward Irving, A.M.

Every churchyard speaks often far more thrilling accents than the senate house of the congregations of the living.

No fact is more self-evident, or more universally admitted, than the text; and no fact withal is more generally disregarded by the living. Do not the sayings and doings of your departed relatives often arrest you in the busy stir of human life, and, according to their tone and character, supply you with fresh incentives to holiness and religion, or to godlessness and impiety? Do not their words often echo in the cells of memory? Do not their features and their forms start into bright contrast with the darkness of actual absence, and light up the chambers of imagery with early recollections? Do not the sounds of the one, and the sight of the other, reach your hearts, and tell upon your resolutions, your actions, and your hopes? And, just in proportion to the width of the sphere in which the departed moved, and the strength of intellectual and moral character they possessed and developed, will be the duration and the plastic power of that influence they have left behind them. A son, for instance, trained to maturity under the affectionate superintendence of a religious mother, breaks loose in the days of his manhood from all the restraints and ties that bound him to the ways of pleasantness and peace, and wounds the heart of his parent, and brings her gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. In after years, and in the far-off land of his prodigality and guilt, early impressions look forth from his memory.

from beneath the wreck and rubbish by which they are covered, and rivet his thoughts on the past. In this stilly hour the ghosts of departed scenes of innocence and peace flit before him, and the voice of his heart-broken mother rings amid his heart's emptiness, and she "being dead yet speaketh" from her grave, with an emphasis and effect which she could not command while she sat beneath her own roof, and beside her own hearth. A reaction takes place in his conduct, and all by the instrumentality of the holy conversation and unblemished worth of her whose lips are closed in death, and who "being dead nevertheless speaketh" for her God, his truth, and his glory.

Or we may vary the illustration, and adopt that of a departed minister of Jesus. His tongue was ever eloquent in the cause of piety and eternal things, and his life was the exact counterpart of his creed—the echo of his preaching, the legible and the living illustration of all his sermons. Under such a ministry as this, many remained impregnable to the claims of eternity, "dead in trespasses and sins." When he has been gathered to his fathers, and the voice that sounded the trumpet of alarm and of battle has been hushed in the silence of the tomb, and the fingers that were taught by Jehovah to fight, and to wield the sword of the Spirit, are nerveless in death—O! often there comes from the pastor laid in the grave, a more persuasive and melting eloquence, than there came from the pastor standing in the pulpit; and from the herald of Jesus wrapped in his winding-sheet, a more successful sermon, than from the herald of Jesus robed in the emblems of his ministerial character. Deep often is the appeal that comes from his grave, and spirit-stirring and touching the discourse which "he being dead yet speaketh." His example lingers behind him; the *imperishable* of his nature walks among his flock, visiting their homes, comforting the mourner, warning the careless, and teaching the ignorant, and continues to stand in the pulpit which the living man occupied, and "to reason of righteousness, and temperance, and judgment."

This, my Christian brethren, is the fair  
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side of the portrait; and were the influence left behind by the dead universally of this stamp and character, then would men be throughout their biography like visitant angels of mercy passing athwart our miserable world, distilling balm and scattering light among men's sons; or as transient gales from the spicy lands of the East, or glorious meteors arising in rapid succession amidst the moral darkness of the earth, imparting light and fearlessness to its many pilgrims, and this would be bettered by every successive generation, till it arose and expanded to its millennial blessedness and peace. But alas! if many of the dead yet speak for God, and for the eternal welfare of humanity, many, many also speak for Satan, and ply after, as before their death, the awful work of sealing souls in their slumber, and smoothing and adorning the paths that lead to eternal death. Just reverse the portraits we have drawn. Suppose that the mother we have alluded to was one that forgot, alike and altogether, the claims of her God, her soul, and her family; and, both by her example and her tuition, fostered the evil passions which are indigenous to our nature. What is the language in which she "being dead yet speaks?" What is the influence she leaves behind her? It is the same voice that comes from her home and her grave: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die:" and often and again will her evil maxims be quoted, and her wicked life appealed to, for incentives to sin, and encouragement in the works and ways of iniquity. She is dead, but the contagion of her character is alive. Her form is beneath the earth, but her voice is still heard to the extent of its sphere, and the spectre of her immorality stalks among those that were attached to her in life: and, just in proportion to the many amiable qualities of her character, will be the depth and duration of the impression made by the vices of her character. Or we may pass to the higher platform, and quote the Christian minister. Let us suppose that his creed and his conduct were irreconcilable antagonists—that he preached like a seraph, and lived like a devil—that he preached so well that it was a pity he

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ever left the pulpit, but lived so ill that it was a pity he ever entered it. O! how destructive the sermons which he "being dead yet speaketh!" Every godless hearer he has left behind him will appeal to the doings of his deceased minister for a sort of license to his conduct, and indulgence for his sins; and the unhappy man will destroy more after his death than during his life.

Thus the departed sinner, as well as the departed saint, "being dead yet speaketh." Thus our sins as well as our virtues survive. Thus we exert a posthumous influence which adds either an impulse upon the advancing chariot of salvation, or throws stumbling-blocks and obstacles in its way. These last characters are like baleful comets that traverse our canopy for awhile, leaving behind them pestilence, and plague, and mildew; or, like the fell simooms of the desert, wafting moral death and desolation to every scene which they visit. It is for these reasons that we urge every one to read the lives of illustrious martyrs, and apostles, and saints, who "being dead yet speak," in behalf of all that is holy, and honest, and of good report; and it is for this reason especially that we would warn every man, and teach every man, to be very jealous of his life and his doings, not merely on account of the present generation, but of generations yet to come, over which his influence for good or for evil may extend.

We have hitherto spoken of the influence for good or for evil which men leave behind them in the immediate circles of their friends and acquaintance; but there are other ways in which men may speak to many generations yet to come, as loudly as if they had a voice which could be heard from the rivers to the ends of the earth. I speak not of the lettered tombstone, which is the voice of many of the dead speaking, after they are gone, to the pilgrim that is wending his way to Zion; nor of monuments erected to commemorate illustrious worth; nor of legacies and bequests to the cause of religion, which make the name of the donor to be mentioned with reverence and respect after he is gone: but I speak of the almost un-

dying influence which genius can exert by reason of that great discovery of modern times—the printing-press. The discovery of printing is the finest illustration of my text; and well may we remark in passing, that many texts which to us appear yet weak or obscure, are waiting for greater advancement in human discoveries to be brought home to us in all their weight and their fulness. By means of printing, man may speak to all kindreds, and tribes, and people, and tongues, and make his voice be heard, with simultaneous power, beyond the Atlantic waves, and upon the shores of the Caspian sea, and amid the population of Europe. Nay, he may speak to accumulating generations after his death, with all the freshness and force of personal eloquence. Printing gives to man a sort of ubiquity and eternity of being: it enables him to outwit death, and enshrine himself amid a kind of earthly immortality. It enables him to speak while yet dead. His words that breathe, and thoughts that burn, are imbodied and embalmed; and with him thousands hold profitable or hurtful communion till time is no more.

If, then, we are loudly called upon to be careful what we speak, and what we do, we are doubly warned to beware what we throw into the press, and invest with a power to endure, and a strength to pass every sea, and to visit every people. Every day as it dawns is adding to the powers, and resources, and expansibilities of man: and, if every day does not also add a larger amount of moral and religious principle to regulate this growing power, then, in the end, will the human race attain a giant's strength, but have an idiot's skill to use it. Our political power is increased; our numerical, and therefore physical, power is increased; our resources are immensely increased; our skill has enabled us, by steam navigation, to bid defiance to tide, and tempest, and time; and our improvements in printing are now so vastly multiplied, that we can give body and form to every word that falls from the lips of man, and circulate the speech that was addressed to a few auditors yesterday to the utmost ends of the globe. We there-

fore want much a commensurate increase of religious principle, and need more than ever to be reminded how and what we are to do. Never was the text so true as it is in the nineteenth century; never did men "being dead yet speak" so extensively, so long, and so loudly.

If any earth-born joys are admitted as visitants amid the celestial choirs, the joy that springs from having written saving and sanctifying works, is the sweetest that reaches the hearts of the saved. And I can fancy a Baxter, a Newton, a Scott, a Rutherford, rejoice with exceeding joy when the angels that minister to them that are to be heirs of salvation, bring word that, in consequence of the "Awakening Call of the Unconverted," or "the Force of Truth," or the "Letters from the Prison of Aberdeen," some sinner has been aroused from his lethargy, and made a partaker of grace, and mercy, and peace. And if, as we believe, any poignant recollections from this side "the bourne whence no traveller returns," reach the memories of the lost, not the least bitter will be the remembrance of having written volumes which are circulated by every library, and sold by every vender, in which the foundations of morality are sapped, and the youth of our world poisoned throughout the whole range of their moral economy. O! it will be the sorest sting of that worm which never dies, and the most agonizing pang of that fire which is never quenched, that their name, and their creed, and their principles after them, gather converts on earth, and carry fell desolation to homes that had otherwise been happy, and corruption to hearts that had else beat high with philanthropy and piety. To speak in many tongues and in many lands, long after they are dead, is a source of deep joy to the holy ones that are saved; and to speak in many tongues and in many lands, after they are dead, is a source of the bitterest sorrow to the damned. And thus it seems to come out, that the intellectual and scientific discoveries of every day, are preparing either additional matter of deep pain to the lost, or of intense joy to the ransomed. Knowledge is not only power for good or for evil, but it is

joy or sorrow to the denizens of eternity. Often and again will the great and the wise that are in glory, wish that their pens had been more employed, and their faculties put more to the stretch; and often will the lost in hell wish, that when they wrote, their right hand had forgotten its cunning, and the sun refused them his light, and the press cast out their works still-born, and consigned them to Lethæan streams.

Thus I have laid before you the mighty influence which emanates from the dead, and the many channels through which that influence may continue to flow forth upon the living, for generations yet to come. I am now anxious, as a watchman upon the walls of Zion, to improve all passing occurrences, and, among the rest at this time, the death of one who has made a deeper sensation among the religious public, than any other minister since the days of Luther and of Knox, and who being dead speaks volumes—I mean the death of the Rev. Edward Irving. His name is now perished from the catalogue of the living upon earth, but found, I am sure, in the book of the living on high. I believe he has gone to the bosom of his Father and his God, where his sincere, but grievous misapprehensions of many great truths are for ever done away. He held, I know, the alone foundation Christ Jesus, and adorned the doctrine he professed by every Christian virtue; and while the "hay, and straw, and stubble," he built on it are all consumed, he himself shall be everlastingly secure.

When I came first to this great metropolis, I found in Mr. Irving a friend when I had none besides, and in his session much spiritual and religious comfort. I was in the habit of spending many Saturday evenings along with a few ministers of England and Scotland, in meditations on the Greek Testament; and when I remember the child-like simplicity, the striking humbleness of mind, and the kind hospitality of that great and good man, I cannot but grieve at the awful eclipse under which he came, and the early tomb he has found. He is gone to the grave, I have reason to believe, with

a broken heart. However much he continued to adhere to the unscriptural and enthusiastic notions he broached, he could not yet shut his eyes to the awful discoveries made concerning the conduct of some of his professedly inspired followers. Conceive men daring to declare that they were inspired by the Holy Ghost, and, in virtue of their pretended inspiration, ordaining apostles, evangelists, prophets, and, all the while, living in the grossest violation of the ten commandments. In these things there was enough to break that good man's heart; and if we combine with these facts the various tribunals at which he has stood—his dissociation and exile from the temple in this city, which the credit of his name had reared, and in which (as he himself most pathetically said) his babes were buried—his deposition from the office of the holy ministry in that church, whose battles he had often fought and whose walls he dearly loved; we can see more than adequate *matériel* to bring him to the grave in the prime of manhood. He set out on the Christian ministry like some warship, with streaming pennants, and with majestic way: but the storms beat, and the waves arose, and prudence was driven from the helm, and, perchance, the seven spirits that are before the throne ceased to breathe upon the sails; and battered, and tossed, she foundered amid rocks and shoals. I left him when I conceived that he had left truth; but still, never did I cease to esteem the man, and earnestly to pray for his recovery. It is because "he being dead yet speaketh" more important lessons than any of the dead I have known, that I bring his character before you this day. Let me, in dependence on divine grace, enumerate a few of the lessons, "he being dead yet speaks" to the ministers and people of Christ.

1. He speaks to us strongly on the *danger that environs a lofty intellect*. No man ever possessed a mind of higher range, and a greater power of fervent and impressive oratory. None, with the exception of his illustrious father in Christ, Dr. Chalmers, was so able to arrest the attention, and gain the hearts, and mould

the doings of his audience. But it was his calamity that he knew and felt too well the greatness of his genius; and this made him fancy he could penetrate the arcana of eternity in virtue of his intellectual prowess, and gather to his bosom flowers that bloomed not for man upon earth, and make known a geography which is to be known hereafter only. Like the eagle, he soared too near the sun, and was struck blind. He was misled by sparks of his own kindling. Had he been but a retired and ordinary parish minister, how happy had it been for Edward Irving! But so it is; the strongest swimmer is first drowned, and the strongest and the foremost warrior most frequently slain.

Here is a lesson for men of great parts. It is not in this case that grace is needed in the inverse ratio of our intellectual strength. The greater our intellect is, the greater our need of grace to guide it. The strong man has most need of discretion, and the rich man of prudence. Let it be your fervent prayer, that the powers you have derived from the Creator may be incased in grace derived from Christ Jesus your Redeemer. Here also is a lesson to men of moderate talents. Envy not the lofty minds of the eloquent and the able: the higher you rise, the greater is your liability to fall. Let us remember, that David's weakness, backed by the blessing of the God of Israel, was stronger than the strength of Goliath without it. Our warfare is not with intellectual, but with spiritual arms. The only desirable gift is the grace of God.

2. "He being dead yet speaketh" of the *dangers of ministerial popularity*. Never yet did obscurity destroy ministerial usefulness, but often has it been impaired and neutralized by the poison of the popular breath. He who is gone had often and again among his audience, the crowns and the coronets of the world—the wise, and the rich, and the illustrious; and the matter of wonder is, not that he should have fallen, but that he did not fall much sooner. It would be well if those, who spare no condemnatory language when they speak of him who is gone, would but think, that if they had

stood in his place, their fall would have been more speedy, and more disastrous. He became giddy from the eminence to which he was raised; and after staggering awhile, he fell, a warning to all never to forget that "by grace they stand," wherever and whatever be the niche which they occupy.

But there is an especial admonition from his tomb to *our congregations*. His people almost idolized him; they listened to *him* instead of listening to God; and therefore the Almighty taught them, by bitter experience, that man is not to receive the glory that pertains exclusively to Jehovah. O never was *minister-worship* so signally punished; and never, I trust, will the lesson cease to be remembered by generations yet to come.

3. "He being dead yet speaketh" respecting the *danger of self-sufficiency and self-confidence*. We are, by no means, prepared to assert, that the verdict of others is to determine the nature of our own decisions on the word of the living God; and we are not prepared to assert, that any national or individual church is infallible; we must all stand or fall by what we ourselves have thought and done, not by what others have said. But when the whole voice of Christendom is lifted up against an opinion which we have cherished—when martyrs have sealed by their blood, and apostles have preached to the death, and reformers have proclaimed in every land, that one proposition is from the Scripture, and the other in direct opposition to its statements, it surely becomes a young and inexperienced divine, to doubt, to pause, to give away. Because we are not to bow to the *ipse dixit* of any, we are not therefore to reject the weight of the testimony of the wise, the holy, the ancient. The whole Church of Scotland decided, through her venerable assembly, that the views of Mr. Irving, respecting the humanity of Christ, were unscriptural; and yet he persisted in his adherence to his former statements, and pitched his own judgment against that of the most venerable, and earned, and holy fathers of the Christian church. I do feel, that next to the Bible, we are to honour the church. But the fact

is, that the whole inspiration of the word of God was clean at issue with those views which Mr. Irving broached respecting the humanity of Jesus. As to the claims to miraculous powers, never were claims so wild and preposterous. I defy them to produce one single instance of miraculous power. The miracles of our Lord and his apostles were so palpable, that men never disputed their supernatural character, but declared that they were either from God or from Satan; but, in the present day, the miracles said to be wrought are such miserable failures, that the question is among themselves whether they really be miracles or not. Doubt is condemnation here. Nothing should be more satisfactory to these deluded men than the fact, that, a fortnight before the death of him to whom we allude, one of the gifted persons, speaking (as he professed) by the Spirit, prophesied that their leader would not die. What is the fact? And what is the inference? I pressed this single incident lately home to the conscience of one of the deluded people, and he told me that Jeremiah had prophesied falsehoods, and, if he erred, the prophets in Newman-street surely had license to err. So indeed they had. So infatuated are these fanatics that, rather than humble themselves to see the absurdity of their views, they will let go their belief in the inspiration of the word of the living God, and shake the very foundations of all our Christianity. May God deliver us from a spirit of self-confidence and self-sufficiency, and lead us to that happy temperament which stands neither in receiving wholesale and unexamined the opinions of men, nor in rejecting and despising them as less to be depended on than our own. Above all, let us ever feel that dependence on the Spirit of God which is our greatest strength and security.

4. "He being dead yet speaketh" respecting the *danger of leaving truth, even in the smallest degree, and preferring opinions simply because they are novel*. There is but one straight and true way, while there are a thousand false. In that way we find that the pious and the illustrious dead have walked, and found peace; and

this way is so clear and well-defined that we may rest assured, whatever scintillations of truth, unobserved before, we bring to the view of men, these must be on the surface only. The great truths of the Bible were, perhaps, more distinctly seen and grasped, at the dawn of the Christian era, than in these its latter days. We may illustrate, and we may place in stronger light, the great articles of a standing or a falling church; but find other and hitherto undiscovered and essential truth, we never can. Take care, then, of deviating from the path of truth by an inch. If once you leave that consecrated and beaten way, you know not to what darkness and error you may eventually come. You then follow the *ignis fatuus* of human fancy, and lose the only light to the feet, and lamp to the path—you lose the thread that leads through the mazy labyrinth of human life—you start away on a wrong scent.

He who is dead speaks powerfully on this subject. He started some wild vagaries on the millennium, and laid these down as axioms in Christian doctrine: but he stopped not here; one wild notion was hatched after another, till the unhappy author was lost in a maze of confusion and error. Had he been spared, I doubt not but that he would have retracted his errors, and returned to the good old ways of scriptural and solid inquiry. As it is, let us learn from the dead the lesson which the Almighty has not seen meet to allow us to learn from the lips of the living—that it is an evil and bitter thing to forsake the plain and the long-established ways of truth. And now, could he revisit them whom he has led astray, O how fervid and how earnest would be his exhortations to abandon their wild and unscriptural creed, and return to the church of their fathers, the mother from whose breasts they first drew the sincere milk of the word, and by whose hallowed altars they were nurtured and fed. O, let the confessed hypocrisy of some of these

fanatics, and the discovered iniquity of others of them—let the mockery of miraculous power they exhibit, and the lying prophecies they utter, prove to these deluded mortals that their church is a refuge of lies, and, with a few sincere and holy exceptions, a sanctuary for hypocrisy, fanaticism, and sin.

To us, who have escaped these delusions, the dead would speak—do not suppose that, because you have the *form* of godliness, therefore all is well: do not suppose that a sound creed is universally connected with a sanctified heart. Remember heart and life heresy is much worse than head heresy. Remember that to no purpose will you say, "Lord! Lord!" if you have not done those things which he has commanded. May the Holy Spirit enlighten our minds to see the truth, and sanctify our hearts to feel and to follow it!

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#### GARRICK'S PRECEPTS TO PREACHERS.

THE celebrated Garrick having been requested by Dr. Stonehouse to favour him with his opinion as to the manner in which a sermon ought to be delivered, the English Roscius sent him the following judicious answer:—

#### "MY DEAR PUPIL,—

"You know how you would feel and speak in a parlour concerning a friend who was in imminent danger of his life, and with what energetic pathos of diction and countenance you would enforce the observance of that which you really thought would be for his preservation. You could not think of playing the orator, of studying your emphasis, cadence, and gesture: you would be yourself; and the interesting nature of your subject impressing your heart, would furnish you with the most natural tone of voice, the most proper language, the most engaging features, and the most suitable and graceful gestures. What you would thus be in the parlour be in the pulpit, and you will not fail to please, to affect, and to profit. Adieu, my dear friend."

## SERMON LI.

### ON MORAL DISCIPLINE

BY THE REV. JOHN SINCLAIR, A.M.

MINISTER OF ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, EDINBURGH.

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*"No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."*

—LUKE ix. 62.

WE are taught in Scripture, to regard this world not only as a state of *probation*, but of *discipline*; not only as a course of *trial*, to ascertain our fitness for another life, but also as a course of *preparation* to acquire that fitness; a school in which certain tastes, and sentiments, and habits, are to be formed, and certain capacities matured, by which we are to become, as St. Paul expresses it, "worthy of the Lord," or endowed with "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light;" or, according to the expression in the text, "fit for the kingdom of God," suited to its moral excellence, as well as ready for its spiritual occupations and enjoyments. One branch of this general qualification, or *fitness*, is here, by our Lord himself, distinctly brought before us, viz. firmness and consistency of character—a kind of moral courage, which, having undertaken a great object, pursues it constantly and perseveringly, without looking back.

Our present purpose, however, will be not merely to confine our reflections to this one particular branch of fitness for heaven, but generally to examine the whole subject of moral discipline, showing its analogies with that natural discipline, by which men are prepared, in this life, for their several pursuits and occupations throughout society. The analogies between infancy, as a season of education for riper years, and the present life

for the life to come, are various and important. On this occasion, we shall illustrate four only of the most remarkable and interesting points of correspondence between the state of a child in preparation for manhood, and of man in preparation for eternity.

I. *Both kinds of discipline are necessary.*

II. *Both are often painful and mysterious.*

III. *Both admit of no delay; and,*

IV. *Lastly, Both are frequently ineffectual.*

Let us, then, begin with the consideration of the first analogy, viz. That the discipline in both cases is *necessary*.

A child, on his first production into the world, is by nature totally incapable of the pleasures and pursuits of manhood. This incapacity pervades equally his physical, his intellectual, and his moral constitution. In each of these respects, he must be properly qualified, by a series of changes and developments, before he can undertake the business of maturer years. His body must be brought, by long continued nourishment and exercise, to manly strength and consistency. His intellect must, by observation, instruction, and reflection, be gradually ripened and matured. His moral faculties, at first wholly dormant, cannot be roused to full activity, till he comprehends sufficiently the relations in which he stands, both to his Creator and to his fellow creatures,

together with the duties which those relations involve. This unfitness of childhood for duties and occupations to which it has not yet been trained or disciplined is very forcibly and distinctly remarked upon by St. Paul, in an illustration familiar to every scriptural reader; "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

Similar to this, my brethren, would be the unfitness of man for a crown of glory in the kingdom of God, were he not prepared by the intermediate probationary discipline of the present life. He is as unqualified, without such preparation, for the employments of the blessed in heaven, as a child is for those of full grown manhood upon earth.

This incapacity, first of all, is *physical*. His body is of such a structure as to be incapable of *enjoyment*, or even *life*, in an abode wholly different from that which it now inhabits, and from which alone it is naturally adapted. Hence, alluding to our present bodily constitution, as gross, imperfect, and unsuitable to the heavenly state, the apostle says, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." For the removal of this unsuitableness, proper methods and opportunities are appointed by the divine Author of our frame. Certain processes of gradual transition must be undergone. Life, death, the grave and the resurrection, are all of them but so many stages in our progress, each of which prepares the body for the next that follows, and all of which prepare it for immortality. The language of St. Paul is here again illustrative of our statement. He compares the dissolution and reconstruction of our bodies to the several changes of a seed—dead, withered, decomposed, and afterwards reviving, with other properties as a plant. "That which thou sowest," he says, "is not quickened, except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be. So also is the resurrection of the dead; it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is

sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, the first Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit, that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality." The changes here described, as being necessary to create fitness in the body for inheriting the kingdom of God, correspond precisely with our progress from the weakness and imperfection of childhood, to the strength and full proportions of mature age.

Thus far the necessity of a *physical* improvement or alteration has been examined. The same necessity may be inferred, respecting the developments of the understanding. Some analogy seems probable between the intellectual growth of the infant mind, and the intellectual preparation of man for the society of superior beings in the world of glory. On this subject, however, we have not the same degree of scriptural information as has been given us respecting the advancement and glorification of the body. St. Paul seems, indeed, to touch upon some mental change, as necessary for our adaptation to the immortal state, where, comparing our degrees of knowledge in this life, with our improved knowledge hereafter, he says, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then, (that is, in the mature immortal state,) face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." To what height of intellectual stature the human mind may ultimately arrive, is impossible for our present limited capacities to conceive. It would be as absurd for us to describe the latent powers and faculties which may be unfolded, in our exal

tation to celestial existence, as it would be for a child to estimate the depths of reasoning with which the future philosopher will pursue his calculations.

We now come to the most important respect in which discipline, temporal and spiritual, is necessary, and in which the state of childhood is again analogous to that of Christian probation. There is necessity, as we observed, for a *moral* preparation, as well as for the physical and intellectual. And the momentous distinction, which gives superior interest to his *moral progress*, is, that it can, to a great extent, be effected in the present life. Much depends upon ourselves. We cannot, indeed, by the mere exertion of our will, prepare our bodies for a glorified condition. Neither can we raise our intellect to angelic eminence; but with respect to virtue and religious conduct, fitness for heaven is, by the grace of God, within the power of us all. Although, as our Lord declares, we are unable, "by taking thought, to add one cubit to the stature of our bodies;" and although we find ourselves still more unable, "by taking thought," to expand our minds into a comprehension of all mysteries, and of all knowledge; yet, "by taking thought," we are able, through the wisdom and benevolence of our Creator, to make continual approaches, *morally*, towards fitness "for the kingdom of God."

This fitness, now to be explained, corresponds exactly with the moral training which prepares the heart in childhood for the duties of more advanced age. The child, without such moral training, could not be trusted. To be admitted safely into society or domestic life, he must acquire previous habits of obedience, docility, and submission to authority—habits of justice, truth, and charity—habits of attention, industry, and self-control. These moral requisites, it must be obvious, are yet more indispensable for admission into the society of celestial beings. Man, considered here below, in the infancy of an immortal existence, must be trained to higher degrees of moral excellence, in proportion to the pure and holy character of that community above, which he aspires to. His aim is

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to dwell with God—to be for ever with his Redeemer—to join the company in heaven. In order to dwell with God—in order to be happy in communion with him, by the exercise, throughout eternity, of praise for his perfections, and of thanksgiving for his mercies, *piety* must have been habitually cultivated in this temporal, this initiatory state. In order to be fitted for social intercourse with the purest and holiest of created beings, united in the bonds of perfect spiritual affection, without the smallest taint of envy, hate, or selfishness, the Christian aspirant must have first subdued, in his course of earthly fellowship with his brethren of this world, the influence of every baser passion, and must have made some progress in the attainment and in the practice of that "charity which never faileth."

Let, therefore, my brethren, this all important truth, the necessity of piety and charity, or, in one word, of holiness, with a view to fitness for the kingdom of God, be continually present to your minds. Beware of superficial and inoperative Christianity. Add to your faith virtue. Remember, that besides a *title* to future happiness through the merits of your Redeemer, you must be moreover *qualified* to enjoy that happiness. Besides being *redeemed* and *justified*, you must be *sanctified*. You must read, and learn, and study the word of revelation, and put your knowledge into practice. This knowledge and this practice must not be partial and variable, ostentatious and pharisaical, but must be consistent, progressive, universal, and sincerely influencing your dispositions, tastes, and feelings. Destitute of these qualifications, the claimant for heavenly blessedness will be found wanting, however plausible his pretensions, and, like the individual in the text, will be unfitted for God's kingdom.

II. A second circumstance of analogy between childhood considered as introductory to riper years, and the present life regarded as preparatory for the life to come, is, that the discipline in both cases is often *painful and mysterious*.

A child placed under wise and prudent guardianship, is subjected to treatment



often grievously irksome to him, which he is quite unable to account for at the time of its infliction, however useful or necessary he may eventually find it. His appetites are under troublesome restraint—his passions under severe control or suppression. His mental faculties are forced into application which he finds distasteful, and considers useless. His patience during sickness is grievously tried by the use of remedies to which he would prefer the disease, and which he finds himself incapable of understanding; or perhaps in health, his manners, looks, words, and gestures, must submit to watchful and vexatious superintendence, of which no account or explanation is satisfactorily given. Above all, his sinful tendencies, engendered by hereditary corruption, his selfishness, his pride, anger, or obstinacy, must be checked and overcome. Reproofs, remonstrances, and even chastisements, must be reiterated, which he cannot possibly reconcile with parental kindness and indulgence. At length, however, he attains to manhood, and is presented with a very different view of things. The mystery clears up—the painful discipline is accounted for—his complaints and repinings at the severities of education are discontinued. He perceives their importance and necessity; he confesses that a contrary system of neglect, or of unlimited indulgence, would have either brought him to an untimely end, or have presented him to the world an object of mingled pity and disgust, diseased and infirm, ignorant, headstrong, and unteachable, a burden to himself, and a nuisance in society.

Analogous, my brethren, to this wholesome process of education and tuition, and not less painful nor less mysterious, is the discipline by which, in this world, our heavenly Father prepares his moral offspring for the world to come. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Similar, also, to the murmurings of childhood are the sentiments of doubt, and suspicion, and distrust, excited by the unsearchableness of his judgments. The misfortunes and casualties, and vexations of every kind, incident to humanity;

acute and lingering diseases, losses, hardships, and privations, infirmity and bad propensities within, and from without bad example, wicked suggestions, and the provocations of injustice, of treachery, of oppression; the facility, above all, of acquiring evil habits, and the difficulty of removing them; these various evils under God's providential government, present to our maturer years an aspect not less revolting and incomprehensible, than in early days the restraints and corrections of our childhood. In the gloom of adversity, we are visited with disquietudes and searchings of heart in respect to the design of our Maker in creating us, and to the prospect of our future destiny. We are tempted at such trying seasons, to allege that greater tenderness and indulgence should be expected from God; and that a course of life, less imbittered by suffering, and less exposed to snares and hazards, would be more compatible with our relationship as children of the universal Father. We ask, in ignorant impatience, Why subject us to discipline at all? If discipline is to "fit us for the kingdom of God," why not at once *create* us in that state of fitness? Why not *at once* communicate the character which, by a painful process, is now slowly and uncertainly matured?

The best reply to such interrogatories, my brethren, would be to put into the mouth of a child the corresponding questions:—why, before entering into commerce with the world, he is placed in a preparatory condition, and is not rather born at once in man's estate, with all his powers, bodily, as well as mental, in their full development? To these questions of impatient youth, the answer of his instructors is obvious. "You would, in that case, be as completely unqualified for the life of mature age, as an idiot; the most solitary recluse, after a life of separation from mankind, brought suddenly into society, would be better able to conduct himself. The novelty of your situation would distract you with astonishment, apprehension, curiosity, and suspense. A long period would elapse before you would so far be familiarized with yourself and with the objects around you as to engage

in any rational pursuit. Your language (suppose you capable of speech) would be offensive from your want of habit in adapting it to the taste and sentiments of others; your manners, for the same reason, would be rude and forward, impetuous and insupportable. Your ignorance, too, of every useful art, joined to your inaptitude for acquiring knowledge, would render you incapable of earning your subsistence. In every valuable respect, you would come forth into society a helpless creature, unformed, unfinished, utterly deficient, and unqualified for that mature condition into which you rashly thrust yourself, without the requisite information and experience."\* The incapacity we have just described of a supposed human agent attempting to engage in human affairs, without the natural preparation of childhood and of youth, may illustrate what we have reason to believe would be man's unfitness, without the discipline of a previous life, for the society and occupations of heaven. Such an intruder into the heavenly mansions would find himself as awkward and unprepared, and as incapable of comfort or enjoyment, as if he had been born full grown into the present world.

However painful then, my brethren, however mysterious the discipline to which we are subjected in this life, let us place implicit confidence in the wisdom and goodness of our heavenly Father. The tendency of all the sorrows and privations that we can suffer, is to foster in our hearts the very dispositions, the very fitness, which we must cultivate for the kingdom of God. Adversity, as St. Paul informs us, not only *tries*, but *produces* virtue; not only *ascertains* our capacity for eternal happiness, but *increases* it. "*Tribulation worketh* patience; our light affliction, which is for a moment, *worketh* for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Indeed, our whole argument for resignation under the painful and mysterious discipline which prepares, or (as I would rather phrase it) educates us for heaven, may be summed up in the words of the same apostle to the Hebrews,—"*Furthermore, we have had fa-*

thers of our own flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? for they, verily, for a few days chastened us, after their pleasure; but he, for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness."

III. The third analogy to be considered has reference to procrastination, namely, that as growth in childhood, and progress towards man's estate, must be begun immediately from the hour of birth, so also our preparatory discipline for immortality *admits no delay*.

The infant is no sooner born than he begins to breathe, to take food, and to perform whatever vital functions are essential to his nourishment and preservation. No long time elapses before his nature prompts him to that activity and restlessness so remarkable in children, and so importantly contributing to their growth and advancement. As soon as his tongue is able to articulate, his boundless curiosity, amidst a universe of entirely new objects, invites him to ask continual questions, by which not only his faculty of speech is perfected, but his understanding ripened and informed. These, and many other processes, mental and corporeal, the new formed human creature begins in infancy without procrastination, and carries on without intermission through the several stages of childhood and youth; taking daily food and exercise, and, by new inquiries, adding daily to his stock of knowledge, till he reaches manhood, and then, at length, in the full maturity of all his faculties, is admitted to the intercourse, employments, and pleasures of rational society. But this progress, physical as well as intellectual, unless commenced at the proper period, would be attended with constantly increasing difficulty, and would at last become impossible. Thus, if the child should not begin at once, and regularly continue taking food and exercise, his body would either perish, or be stunted in its growth. If he neglected practising in early life his faculty of speech, the organ would soon lose its pliability, and become unfitted for articulation. Or if, farther, he should omit to use this faculty for purposes of inquiry, if he should delay all

\* See Bishop Butler's Analogy.

study and observation during infancy and youth, while his memory is retentive and his habits susceptible of improvement, the powers of his understanding, thus continually dormant, and never called into waking exercise, would every day become more sluggish, and be at last incapable of development.

These simple and acknowledged facts, with regard to the present life, should lead us naturally to anticipate corresponding facts in connexion with our discipline, preparatory to future immortality. That discipline, to be successful, must be early; to be effectual, must not be delayed. The difficulty is augmented rapidly by each successive act of procrastination. Our evil habits and propensities are daily more confirmed the longer they continue in operation. Our vicious practices strike deeper root into our nature, our resistance to the impressions of religious truth becomes continually more inveterate. Familiarity produces indifference, until at length, as years advance, and old age draws on, a change of character is almost hopeless, and then follows death, which extinguishes all capacity of farther growth or progress, and renders change of character impossible. The best practical deduction from the foregoing statement is powerfully made by Solomon, "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." This life is the only time allowed us to prepare for the next. No second opportunity can be hoped for. As, my brethren, there is no state granted to man of second youth, in which the errors of the first might be redeemed; so after death, there is no second life on earth, in which we might commence again the race of immortality. "As the tree falls, so must it lie." Delay not, then, preparations which are indispensable—preparations which every day are more difficult to be made—preparations which cannot at last be made at all.

IV. There remains one more analogy between infancy as an introduction to manhood, and the present life as introductory to life eternal, viz., that this pre-

paratory discipline is, in both cases, *often ineffectual*.

Of the children born into the world, a very small proportion ever reach maturity. The far greater number are, by various causes, brought to an untimely end; perhaps by inadvertency and folly of their own; perhaps by the violence and oppression of others; perhaps by accident, by sickness, or by premature decay. The same observation may be extended to the lower animals, and still more forcibly to plants, the seeds of which are in so many ways exposed to destruction, that we can scarcely find one seed escaping among the millions which fall away and perish. These millions appear absolutely lost and wasted, so intent does nature seem on bringing one plant to maturity, as to think the loss of any number for that purpose comparatively insignificant. And yet those seeds or germs which are prematurely destroyed, and those which happen to attain full growth, were at first created, equally and indiscriminately, capable of the perfection at which so few arrive.

Facts like these, my brethren, within the knowledge and observation of every human being, suggest a question the most awful that can enter the human heart. Does the spiritual world present similar phenomena to what we have here remarked in the natural? Is there in the case of man, considered as an immortal being, any thing analogous to the profusion and apparent waste exhibited in the works of nature around us? As the seeds of plants are designed for vegetable life, so is man designed for future happiness. Is that design often frustrated? Are there many who never reach the perfection for which they were created, and who are finally rejected as *unfit for the kingdom of God*? In short, *are there few that be saved*?

In making answer to this question, the conclusion to which we must arrive, whether we look around us in society, or consult the oracles of God, is most appalling. We see few appearances warranting a belief, that the discipline to which men are subjected in this world produces the effects intended; on the contrary, we dis-

cover fearful indications that the present state, so far from eventually proving a school of virtue, proves to the greater number, through their perverseness, an actual school of vice. Circumstances calculated for their moral improvement; circumstances calculated to produce in them dispositions fit for heaven, seem rather to have an opposite effect, and to strengthen them in sin. Prosperity, instead of exciting gratitude to God, inflames self-confidence. Adversity, instead of working acquiescence in the divine will, confirms impatience and irritability. The contemplation of other men's distress makes more impenetrable the heart which ought to have been softened. Increased acquaintance with religious motives, continually withstood, turns half compliance into habitual opposition.

These alarming reflections are rendered more alarming by corroborative statements in the word of God. We all are well acquainted with the solemn admonition of our Lord, "Many are called, but few are chosen." We all know what he added in confirmation of that often repeated warning, "Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land, but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the days of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them were cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." To the same effect is elsewhere the declaration of Christ, "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat; narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Of the same fearful import is the language of the apostles, "Though the number of the children of Israel," says St. Paul, "be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved." And St. Peter, as a caution against sluggishness and indifference, points to the ark of Noah, *wherein few*, he observes, *that is, eight souls*, were saved from the waters, when an entire world was overwhelmed.

Understanding these texts in the mildest sense which they admit of, we find them

tremendously significant. They more than warrant our assertion, that as a child, though certainly designed to attain the natural perfection and maturity of manhood, often fails of reaching it, and comes to an untimely end; so, in like manner, man, considered as an immortal being, under discipline to prepare him for the perfection and felicity of heaven, falls short of heavenly blessedness in numerous and terrific instances, and is ruined, finally, totally, irretrievably.

There is, however, one most important distinction to be carefully kept in view, namely, that the failure of the child in reaching manhood is often caused by circumstances which he neither can prevent nor control; whereas the failure of the man to attain eternal life is always caused by himself—by his own folly, his own negligence, his own perverseness. Everlasting happiness is offered to the acceptance of all: the trials and temptations incident to the present world are designed to mature in us that character which shall qualify us for the next. The assistance, above all, of the Holy Spirit, the author of all holy desires, is vouchsafed us, that we may pass through those trials and temptations with success. "The Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." If, therefore, we reject, or if we fail to profit by the precious gift, the fault is in ourselves.

Be instructed, O wavering Christian! by the counsel of your Redeemer. *Strive*—exert every faculty you possess, to *enter in at the strait gate*; for many, I say unto you, shall seek—that is, shall use some feeble efforts, to *enter in*, but shall not be able. First, secure a title to future happiness, by believing on the name, and relying upon the merits of the Son of God, and then proceed with strenuousness, with courage and perseverance, under the guidance of God's Spirit, in the discipline of holy preparation. *Be strenuous*, for you see that weak endeavours are unavailing. *Be courageous*, for God will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able. *Be persevering*, for "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

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## SERMON LII.

ADDRESSED TO THE YOUNG.

BY THE REV. JAMES BENNETT, D.D.

*"Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest."—Mark x. 21*

You know, my young friends, that a certain proud and prosperous king, Belshazzar, when in the midst of a royal feast, and surrounded by festivity and apparent security, was suddenly disturbed by seeing a mysterious hand—the hand of God—writing upon the wall, in letters of light, these remarkable words,—“MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN;” and you are aware that a certain inspired prophet, an infallible interpreter, explained the mysterious words to mean—“Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.” Our Lord Jesus has come this night, presenting himself to you, weighing a young man in the balance, and pronouncing him wanting. What if the flame which issues from the lamps in this place were all to fly off, assuming upon the wall the form of letters, and, when you came to look at these letters of light, you saw the word TEKEL, and you recollected the meaning: for the prophet had told you it signified—“Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting?”

If I present Christ to you to-night thus weighing a young man and pronouncing him wanting, do not think it unkind; happy had it been for Belshazzar had he taken the warning that had been given him; for that very night Belshazzar was slain:—and who knows but this night you may die! Well will it be for you if you take the warning, and, before you die, recover from that state in which you are wanting, and be found accepted before God.

I would, then, remind you that you

have a very kind and gracious judge in this person who here weighs you; and I shall show you how kind, and considerate, and impartial he is; for I shall endeavour to point out to you the two scales of this balance, and show you, first, what is in the scale that is favourable to you; and, secondly, what is in the scale that is unfavourable; for you see that my text, on the one hand, declares that—“Jesus beholding, loved the young man;” while, on the other, he declared to him—“one thing thou lackest.”

I. WHAT IS THERE IN THE SCALE THAT IS FAVOURABLE TO YOU?

If I had nothing else to say but that God has been very gracious to our fallen race—that he has so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth upon him might not perish, but have everlasting life—that the Son of God has assumed our nature, has trodden upon the same earth on which you tread—that he breathed this air that you breathe—that he went about continually doing good, and, at length, poured out his precious blood upon the cross for our salvation—that he commissioned this to be proclaimed to every creature, and invited all men to come unto him that they might be saved—and that his own Spirit accompanies this proclamation, and breathes upon the minds of men for their conversion and salvation—you would say, this is, indeed, a weight in the scale in our favour. But our text speaks of some peculiar regard that Jesus had to the young man here—for that he was young

another evangelist assures us. There are several peculiar things that are in your favour; they may be comprehended under the three following:—The first is, many of the qualities of youth are favourable to religion, and as such Christ regards them; the second is, that many of the words of the sacred Scriptures are favourable to the hope of your conversion, and as such you ought to regard them; and the third is, that many of the dealings of God confirm all these hopes, and should inspire you with the most earnest desire to enjoy the same blessings.

1. *There are many of the qualities of youth which are favourable to religion, and as such Christ regards them.* When he saw this young man coming, it is said—“he loved him,” though he pronounced him wanting, and the young man went away sorrowful. Yet Christ loves what is good, as far as it goes, though there may not be that spiritual good which is the object of his complacency and of his moral approbation, and which will secure our everlasting salvation. When Christ looked abroad upon this world, he viewed all the works of God with complacency and benevolence. If he saw the lily of the field, he beheld its delicate beauty—if he saw the lark mounting upward to the sky, he saw it with pleasure. “The Lord rejoiceth in all his works;”—his benevolent heart delighted to see the beauty and glory which God had diffused over the works of his hand, and he said—

“These are thy works, Almighty Father,  
Thine this universal frame, thus wondrous  
fair,  
Thyself how wondrous then!”

Well, the Saviour who saw the lily and heard the lark with pleasure, never could look at spring in the countenance of youth without that comprehensive approbation which he felt towards the material works. The glowing countenance of youth, the sparkling eye, the bounding limb, the overflowing spirits, the warm affections, the retentive memory, the ardent imagination, the burning zeal, the noble, generous daring of youth—all these things have their charms, and, as far as they go,

though they are but natural excellencies, they are objects of complacency and approbation. When our Lord sees in youth a sort of open frankness, different from the cold, cautious, cunning reserve of an old practised sinner, Christ prefers the frank, open, bland spirit of the youth to the serpentine spirit of an aged sinner; and, although it is something natural, not spiritual, yet Christ has a regard for it as a natural excellence. That tender, warm affection which children feel—that tendency to contract a friendship—to open their bosom—to give out their hearts to receive what is kind and amiable, and to give it a frank and warm reception, all this is quite congenial with the Saviour’s mind, it suits his own open, kind, and affectionate bosom. And that tendency to receive a testimony—that readiness to receive what is told them, and not to suspect lies upon every lip, but to be disposed, until they find things false, to believe them true, even that also, which is the natural temper of youth, is an excellence; for if sin had never entered we should never have formed a conception of any body deceiving us. Now, it is very true that, with all this simplicity of the dove, we ought to unite the wisdom of the serpent; but if we cannot unite them—if they must be separated, as they too frequently are—give us the dove, take who will the serpent! Now, our Lord saw this spirit in the young man, and it was to his eye a pleasing sight as far as it went. The retentive memory that lays hold of the truth and keeps it fast, that makes youth fit for the learning time, was also, in our Saviour’s eye, a pleasing sight, rendering, as it does, the mind a sort of secure storehouse for truth.

Now, all these things are favourable to religion. Religion asks for your open heart—religion asks for a believing mind that can confide in a friend who tells the truth, and does not wish to deceive you. Religion calls for the faithful memory that stores up divine truth, and remembers Jesus Christ, who, of the seed of David, was sacrificed for us.

2. *There are words in the Scripture—promises in the holy book—that are peculiarly favourable to you, and should inspire*

*your hope.* With what delight does the holy man adduce these words! He seems to pour out all the stores of sacred eloquence to trace the old age to the life—you see it wrinkled, old, decrepit, peevish, stooping, going down to the grave; and for what?—but that you may hearken to the voice which stands at the head of it—“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.” How large a part of the book of Proverbs is addressed to the young! “Hear, O my son! the instructions of thy father, and forget not the law of thy mother.” How many have been touched to the heart with these words—and they are fit to touch the heart—“I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me!” This one assurance, that God has a peculiar regard to those that seek him early, is a most delightful encouragement to the young. When our Lord Jesus is described as a shepherd, he gathers the lambs in his bosom. What a world of affection and delight does this open to your view!—your Redeemer seeking, and feeding, and nourishing, and delighting in the affections of the children. He carries them in his bosom, and warms and nourishes them in the love of his own heart. There is nothing like this said to encourage any one to put off religion to old age; but, oh, what is said to encourage the young to come to Christ! The fact is, that there is not one word in all the Bible that is specifically intended to encourage persons to defer religion to the time when they grow old—every thing is said against this. But there is much to encourage you to embrace religion when you are young.

3. *Remember that, as the word, so the works of God—his works of grace—confirm these things that are said, so earnestly, to encourage you.* A large part of those who are ignorant of religion think that it is a thing only for old age—very proper when men have grown old, but very unfit for them while they are young; it does not sit well upon young people; and they are, therefore, for deferring it to old age. Now, you will observe that all who are

of this opinion are utterly ignorant of religion. They know no more of what religion is than a blind man knows of light and colours. Precisely the reverse of this is the opinion of all who know religion. They say that youth is the proper time for religion. Look at the religious societies where the gospel is not preached, where salvation by works is proclaimed, and where religion is placed in external forms and ceremonies—there you will see at prayers none but the old and decrepit; but look at those congregations where the gospel is preached, and where the nature of spiritual religion is understood, and God is worshipped in spirit and in truth—there you will see at prayers the young; and a large proportion of those who join together in voluntary associations for prayer to the mercy-seat of God are young people. The fact is, where religion is truly understood, it is regarded as the ornament, the glory, the bliss of youth; so that the earlier it is possessed the better. And where religion is not understood, and a gloomy superstition is substituted for it, there it is very natural to say, the later the better. Now, let me remind you that the works of God confirm his words. Perhaps not one in forty is converted after the age of forty; and perhaps ninety-nine out of a hundred who know any thing of real religion are converted somewhere about twenty. This is a solemn consideration, let me attempt to impress you with it. Suppose you had fallen into a dream, and you thought you saw an immense plain crowded with persons of all ages, from the young and the middle-aged to the old and decrepit; and you saw the Saviour of sinners descend in all his majesty and glory, and passing through this crowd, taking more from the ranks of the young, fewer from the ranks of the middle-aged, and much fewer still from the aged, conducting them to a gate, and admitting them within, on which was written this inscription—“Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that go in thereat;”—suppose, on waking in the morning, you were to tell this dream to an aged friend, and he was to say, last night

dreamed exactly the same dream, and saw exactly the same representation—a few old people, more in the middle life, but the great body of those that entered in at the gate of life were young men. When I awoke, said the old man, I trembled as the aspen leaf, and the bed shook under me, and I thought I was come to that time of life when it was too late to be converted. And would you not say, I was glad when I awoke; for the greater part of those that are converted are converted at the happy period of my time of life. Well, my young friends, this is not all a dream. It is the solemn, serious, fact of the case, that the greatest part of those who are converted are converted in youth. There is nothing, indeed, to cut off any from hope; but such is the fact; read the history of those who have become real Christians, and you will learn that the grace of God touched their hearts while they were yet young. And when you find exceptions you look upon them as a rarity, a wonder of grace, and you say, happy is it for you that you have escaped that fearful ruin that generally comes upon those who put off religion to old age.

But now, my dear young friends, I would turn to the second part of the subject. And I shall endeavour to point out—

## II. WHAT IS IN THE SCALE THAT IS AGAINST YOU.

“One thing thou lackest,” says Christ; and that was the one thing needful; for “he went away sorrowful.” There are three things in this opposite scale that are against you.

1. The first is that *all that is merely amiable and hopeful in nature is not grace, nor is it at all really valuable in God's sight.*—It is not true virtue or holiness. It is, indeed, as far as it goes, pleasant to the eye, and better than the opposite sort of things. That openness of mind, that frankness of disposition, that readiness to credit a report, that retentive memory, that bounding, ardent spirit, that noble, generous zeal which youth feels, when undertaking any thing, to do it thoroughly well—all these are, indeed, lovely in their way—but they are not religion. There

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is nothing in nature, considered in itself, that is spiritual, holy, worthy to be approved of the moral governor of the world, or that will stand the scrutiny of the last day. “In us, that is, in our flesh, there dwelleth no good thing.” Mere nature has nothing but what is sinful. Examine it into the very core, and it will all be found wanting; for there is not in our fallen nature any real love to God, any genuine love of holiness, any true hatred of sin, any real reliance of soul upon Christ, or any desire for God's glory. All these things, that are the essence of what is truly lovely, spiritually amiable and good, are wanting in us. So that, whatever excellence there may be in your youth, and whatever your earthly parents may approve in you, there is nothing, where there is no holiness, that the holy law of God can approve. You sometimes may, perhaps, have seen the corpse of a departed friend, and if you have seen more than one you may have observed, in some instances, a redness on the cheek that even sickness does not remove, and that attends them even to their coffin. Now, that flush upon the cheek will make a corpse look pretty, and sometimes the corpse will look so pretty that the friends will hang over it with delight, and kiss the cold cheek that seems to repel the token of affection; but, after all, remember this is only the loveliness of a corpse; and, whatever excellence you may have as amiable young people, yet, unconverted, it is the cheek of the rose with the heart of the corpse. “Dead in trespasses and sins” is the character which God pronounces yours. Now that is a weight in the scale against you.

2. There is a second consideration, and it is that *all those things that may appear amiable and lovely, if they are not sanctified by religion, will become hostile.* To be frank and generous, unsuspecting in your mind, exposes you to receive whatever error may be presented to you, and makes you in danger of becoming the prey of the designing infidel, so that you may hearken to his specious lies, and swallow the gilded bait, and be for ever taken in the snare. That readiness of mind that you have to receive a report, and to treasure up what

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you hear, may make your memory the storehouse of all impurity. You may recollect what is foul and filthy, and so filling the chambers of your memory, it may render your mind all that is loathsome to the eye of him who searches the heart, and who will finally make the scrutiny.

My friends, remember besides this that *you will not always be young*. You are not so young now as when you entered this place of worship; while you are watching my lips you are drawing breath, it is going out into the empty air, and shortly you will breathe it all away—it will be gone; well then, remember, if you grow old without religion, the peculiarities favourable to religion in youth are gone. Instead of the frank ingenuous openness of the unsuspecting youthful mind, there will be the close, cold, suspicious one—the heart shut up against and impervious to the truth. The warm and feeling breast, that then was so ready to receive what was amiable and kind, will now become cold and chilled as the ices of the poles. The memory, that once was so quick to receive and faithful to retain, will become treacherous and slippery, so that you will forget what you heard yesterday. 'All those qualities that were once so favourable to religion will be exchanged for all that is most unfavourable. And if you defer religion in the days of your youth, how soon may you become the aged sinner, who says "the days are come when I have no pleasure in them!"'

3. But let me entreat you to remember, in the last place, that, *if the grace of God present not, all the promises of youth may perish in everlasting despair*. For youth is not immortal; though you are young now, you may die while you are young, and if you are still waiting, and refusing to embrace Christ and give up yourselves to him, while you hesitate, death may be deciding, and while you may be saying, "not to-day, Lord Jesus—to-morrow,"—death may be saying, "not to-morrow, but to-day—this night thy soul shall be required of thee." And if this should be the case, and you die unregenerate, unforgiven, having come to years of accountability, having an understanding to judge

between good and evil, and a conscience to have warned you of your danger, and having had faithful counsels and every opportunity—if you die in your sins, how melancholy is the consequence! Then that glowing countenance blooming with youth, now withered and decayed, sinks down into all the darkness and gloom of the grave, and the blackness of darkness and everlasting fire gathers around you. Then that warm imagination, that once painted to itself fairy scenes of future felicity, will be left to riot in all the dreadful conceptions of everlasting misery:—what it must be to spend an eternity of agony! Then the memory that might have been the treasury of divine truth, and stored up God's gracious words, will only recal all that will torment you—all your opportunities and advantages, and all your own perverse abuse, neglect, and rejection of them all. Oh, why must all the flower of youth go down to perdition? Why must the spring be blasted, and everlasting winter wither the soul?—Why must that which should have been consecrated to Jesus be for ever the subject of divine wrath?—and he that might have been a rose-bud in the Saviour's crown—his diadem of salvation—be a withered weed cast out to everlasting abhorrence and rejection? Remember, my dear young friends, how soon these sad reverses may happen. You are aware that young children frequently sicken, and sometimes die suddenly. Have you ever known one on whom consumption has seized? There may indeed have been a hectic flush upon the face, but there was the glassy brightness of the eye which intimated that all was not right within. They told you they were getting better; they fancied it; but you saw that the getting better existed only in their imaginations, for every one else could perceive that they were sinking down into the grave. Remember that this deceptive disease is the disease of young persons. And let this warn you of the danger of deferring religion until sickness comes upon you. It is terrible that that very disease, the most likely to arrest you, may be the one you may die of, and you may die getting better—that is, in your

own apprehensions. Oh, then, hear the voice of the Saviour, now inviting you and saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!"

Now let me entreat you to take the following COUNSELS,—

1. Never think you are too young to be converted, and forgiven, and saved, and given up to God, while you know that you are not too young to sicken, to die, to be judged, to go to heaven or hell.

2. Never take up with any thing short of true religion—the entire change of the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost—the true and full forgiveness of all your sins by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. For only this sort of religion will do you any good.

3. Never be satisfied with *having* religion—seek to *abound in it*. Not merely to be alive, but lively; for, if religion is worth any thing, the more you have of it the better; seek to have as much of God's image as can possibly be enjoyed upon earth.

4. Let me remind you that for this purpose you should study your own easily besetting sin, especially the sins of your youth—be warned against them—watch against them—strain all your efforts to oppose and destroy them, and ask by the grace of God to keep yourselves unspotted from the world.

5. For this purpose form a rule, lay down a plan for life, laying out every day as it ought to be spent, and as you will wish you had spent it when you come to die; for this purpose read daily the Holy Scriptures—consult aged and experienced Christians, and ask them how they would advise you to conduct yourself before God.

6. Lastly, seek to live not for yourselves, but to live usefully as well as safely. Do as much good as you can in the world, and as you are young, and have an influence upon the young, seek to wean them to the knowledge, and love, and service of Christ. It is a sad thing to leave the world before we have done any good in it. Exert yourselves, then; and, if you have a short race to run, you will be a quick seizer of the crown. If

you leave your friends soon upon earth, it will be to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. This is the consummation of the felicity of true Christians, to be with him where he is that they may behold his glory. Amen.

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"Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering."

WHEREWITHAL shall I come before the Lord, and find acceptance with the most high God? is a question, the solution of which must be of the greatest importance to a sinner. "All have sinned," say the Scriptures, and thou, O my soul, among the rest. But the same Scriptures assures us, that by an irrevocable law of heaven, no sinner can draw near to God, so as to find acceptance in his sight, but on the ground of an atoning sacrifice, which, according to the law, was to be laid on wood, and burnt together with it. But where is such a sacrifice to be found? and where the wood to burn it? The text tells me, "Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering." Lebanon, high and extensive, the range of ten thousand beasts; Lebanon, celebrated for the variety, beauty, largeness, and durability of its trees; Lebanon, with all its numerous herds, and lofty cedars, could not furnish a sacrifice sufficient to atone for the sin of our souls, nor wood enough to consume such a victim. Yea, the cattle on a thousand hills would have been rejected; nor could our first-born, the fruit of our body, have atoned for our transgressions. The redemption of the soul is precious, and nothing that sees corruption could equal it in value. Where shall I look? Whither shall I flee for help? Come, my soul, from Lebanon; look from the top of Shenir, Hermon, and all the celebrated mountains of Judea. Look to the place of skulls, the despised hill, with its cursed tree; "the place of the pouring out of ashes:" the place where the carcasses of criminals were indignantly thrown, as the ashes, the refuse of society. *There* you will find a full answer to your question, filling you with peace and joy in believing it.

## SERMON LIII.

### CHRISTIAN WORSHIP DELINEATED.

BY THE REV. ROBERT BRODIE, A.M.

*' Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father ; but the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth : for the Father seeketh such to worship him.'—John iv. 21, 23.*

WE are informed, in the commencement of this chapter, that, when our Lord was passing through Samaria, the disciples went for a supply of provisions into the town of Sychar, while he waited at Jacob's well in the immediate neighbourhood. As he rested there in the heat of the day, fatigued with his journey, a Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water, from whom he requested that she would "give him to drink." This request, so little in the manner and spirit of the country to which his dress and accent bespoke him to belong, for the Jews had an implacable enmity towards the Samaritans, filled her with a surprise which she did not attempt to conceal. The surprise was increased on hearing the answer given to the question so much agitated between the two nations, and which, on discovering his prophetic character, she put to him, Whether Gerizim or Jerusalem had the preferable claim as a place of worship. Instead of assigning the superiority to either, an exclusive claim was denied to both. This accords with the representations which the Scriptures every where give of the liberal spirit of the Christian system, in conformity to which the disciples of Christ are, at this moment, assembled in so many different places, under such a diversity of outward circumstances, with the same expectations of acceptance.

The appropriate beauty of the house of God is the beauty of holiness. "The

hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. But the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

I. Let us consider the *negative* description of the character of Christian worship—what it is *not*.

1st. It is not *sectarian*.

None present will suppose that I use the epithet sectarian in the sense in which it is often used, as descriptive of those who separate, however conscientiously from the established forms of the religion of their country. The attribute of Christianity which I have in view, is directly opposed to the narrow feelings which this application of the epithet indicates. Rightly interpreted, it describes a character not confined to any one class of the professors of religion, but extensively prevalent among all. At the period to which my text relates, it was not, as the Jew wished to maintain, exclusively applicable to the Samaritan, nor is it now exclusively applicable to the advocates of dissent. He is the sectary, and he alone, who would introduce into religion the principle of monopoly, who neither sees nor wishes to see any thing good or praiseworthy beyond the limits of his own denomination.—Sectarianism is in the mind rather than in the outward act. There may be no separation from others in the one case, where there is, and where, unless all moral distinctions are to be

confounded, there ought to be a separation in the other. To assert that we are not justifiable in withdrawing from the communion of those whose religious practices and principles we deem unscriptural, would be to represent protestantism itself as a criminal schism. But our benevolent regards may be cherished towards those from whom we conscientiously separate. Though to us they appear to err, charity will lead us to hope that, in many cases, the errors are not wilful, and not inconsistent with general religious sincerity. In this world we "see darkly as through a glass." Even inquiring minds, with equal degrees of candour and zeal for the truth, may, in religious matters, arrive at very different conclusions. Party distinctions, as such, and separate from the motives in which they originate, and by which they are sustained, are of no importance in the sight of God; and experience shows that they are but equivocal tests of character. In communions the farthest removed from the purity of scriptural requirement, sincere though misguided worshippers may be found. In communions, on the other hand, whose principles and forms are adjusted with a professedly scrupulous regard to the divine injunctions, there may be little of that spirit which imparts to them their chief value in the sight of God. An exclusive religion can never be a scriptural one. Christianity reveals the way in which guilty creatures can be reconciled to God, and every one who, in faith and penitence, has received the proffered remedy, and whose faith operates as a purifying principle, stands accepted in the sight of heaven, whatever misapprehension in regard to subordinate points he may still cherish; and to whatever uncharitable judgment he may on this account be exposed among men, themselves equally fallible and imperfect. "Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall men worship the Father. But the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

2d. It is not *local*.

An improper estimate of the importance to be attached to particular places was alike the error of the Jew and Samaritan.

In the former this feeling was strengthened by the misapprehension or perversion of the divine direction given to his forefathers, "Unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even to his habitation shall ye seek, and thither shalt thou come, and thither ye shall bring your burnt-offerings; and there ye shall eat before the Lord your God." To the most scrupulous observance of this injunction, no criminality could attach. It would have been highly presumptuous to have offered sacrifice, or to have observed any of the annual festivals elsewhere. The error lay in ascribing an efficacy to the place independent of the character of the worshipper. An error of the same kind, but with less to justify it, was adopted by the Samaritan. He could not say that there was any divine command directing to the choice of Gerizim, as being particularly suited to the offices of religion. He could say, however, that tradition pointed it out as the spot on which Abraham and Jacob had worshipped. And he attached to it, on this account, a sanctity equal to that which the Jew claimed for the temple at Jerusalem. That the same superstitious spirit should still be seen among the votaries of false religion, is natural. The Hindoo, performing his weary pilgrimage to the temple of his idol divinity, and the Mohammedan offering a similar tribute to the tomb of his prophet, are spectacles which the spirit of their respective systems would have led us to expect. But what shall we say to opinions and usages equally superstitious among the professors of Christianity? What shall we say to the religious value which was formerly, and is still, attached to a visit to the local scenes of our Saviour's miracles, and sufferings, and death? What shall we say to those religious pilgrimages which are made to spots far less remarkable? In what light, I might add, are we to view the religious veneration which is sometimes paid to consecrated buildings? It is proper, where practicable, that particular edifices should be appropriated to the worship of God; but no peculiar efficacy belongs to these places.

Even Zion, with all its sublime associations, and solemn remembrances, has now ceased to be sacred. It is on the spirit, not the local situation, of the worshipper that his acceptance depends. "Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall men worship the Father. But the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

3d. It is not *external*.

To the mere forms of religion a very undue importance was attached, both by Jews and Samaritans. This was especially the case with the former. There was a conformity to the divine requirements in the constitution of the Jewish priesthood, and a splendour in their temple services, which could not be claimed for the rival system. The improper spirit which these tended to cherish is too congenial to the depravity of the heart to be confined to a particular period or people. A dependence on mere outward observance, and, when it is possessed, a glorying in ritual splendour, are equally the error of the superstitious part of the professors of Christianity. The same boastful terms in which the Jew was accustomed to speak of the one, are still employed with reference to the other. It may be justly questioned, however, whether these services are entitled to the very lowest species of merit which has been claimed for them—that of being adapted to impress the imagination, and whether it is not at first only, and on the minds of strangers, that this effect is produced. It is not those whose forms of worship are most simple, who have least of what may be called the poetry of religion. It is the truths presented to the mind, rather than the forms exhibited to the eye, by which the imaginative faculty is cultivated. A Protestant peasantry will, perhaps, be found, in this respect, to have the vantage ground over a Catholic. The supplications of penitence, the humility of faith unfeigned, the confidence of Christian hope, and the love of God in the heart, are the sweetest sounds, and the most delightful sight, and the most exquisite feelings which can enliven our devotion. But they are impressions which a pompous ritual cannot impart,

and for which, when wanting, it can be no substitute. "Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall men worship the Father. But the true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

II. Let us consider the *positive* description of the character of this worship.

1st. It is *spiritual*.

The mere homage of the lips, were it known to be so, would not be accepted by one man from another. The language of insincerity, however flattering, is justly considered as disgusting in the common intercourse of life. And it cannot surely be less so when it is presented to an omniscient God. Even at a time when local and external worship was in its fullest operation, there was evidence sufficient that something more was necessary to acceptance. No language could convey a more striking idea of the immensity of the object of worship, and of the spirituality required in the worshipper, than that employed by Solomon at the dedication of the temple. "Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee, how much less this house which I have builded?" Similar to this was the language which, through Isaiah, was employed by God himself. "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house that ye build for me, and where is the place of my rest? To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite heart, and who trembleth at my word." It is nevertheless true that, in one respect, outward observances had, under the former economy, a value altogether independent of the character of the worshipper. Being intended to prefigure and introduce a higher dispensation, they answered an important end, even when no spiritual qualities were possessed, and no spiritual benefits were received by the offerer. At the time when our Lord held this conversation with the woman of Samaria, the sacrifices, which were still observed with all the nicety of ceremonial precision, had lost none of their original typical significance, though, in a great majority of instances, it was cus-

tem, not intelligent piety, which dictated the observance. But no such secondary adventitious value belongs to the rites of Christianity. The age of typical institutions is passed. Unaccompanied by the devout feelings of the worshipper, all outward observances are worse than useless. It is not merely the rising incense and the bleeding victim, even the bended knee and outstretched hand, if inward principle is wanting, will be only a solemn mockery. "God is a spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth;" in spirit, as opposed to forms; in truth, as opposed to shadows.

2d. It is *filial*.

Terror in all ages has been the predominating spirit of idolatrous worship. This was the necessary consequence of the circumstances of the worshippers. With no higher illumination than unassisted reason, conscience tells us that we are sinners. Unassisted reason, however, cannot impart to us the certainty of forgiveness. And if the certainty of this is not possessed, there is nothing to exclude the tormenting dread which must be the inseparable accompaniment of the consciousness of guilt. This feeling is, accordingly, strongly depicted in the outward features of idolatry. Its ceremonies have been principally *deprecatory*, or intended to avert punishment. The sanguinary rites of Moloch, so often referred to in the Old Testament Scriptures, and in which human victims were the offering, have been widely prevalent. Of this revolting character were the druidical rites of our forefathers in this island. Of the same kind are the religious rites of many heathen nations at this day. Nor is this the character of the rites only. The very hideous forms of their idols (those which have been brought from the South Sea Islands are an example) are a striking testimony to the fact that terror is the predominating feeling in the religion of those who are destitute of the light of divine revelation.

The same feeling, though in a much smaller degree, characterized the worship of the Jews. Not that that highly privileged people were left in uncertainty re-

specting the doctrine of forgiveness. In respect of the *mode* of it, their conceptions might be indistinct and imperfect. But there was no obscurity in regard to the *fact*; that being as clearly promulgated under the Jewish economy as it now is under the Christian. Accompanied, however, as the information was with so many and such striking displays of sovereignty and power, the feeling of awe was in most as prevalent as that of love. It was reserved for Christianity to merge these sterner attributes of the divine character in those that were more attractive, and, by one potent word, to dispel every vestige of terror from the minds of the worshippers. It is not in the relation of a king, sovereign, or master, that you are called on to approach the Divinity, but in the endearing relation of a father—a father who seeks only the happiness of his spiritual offspring, and whose character has been rendered palpable by the engaging attributes of Him who is "the impress of his person." Fear is in this way supplanted by love, and a filial, not a slavish, spirit pervades our devotions.

3d. It is *universal*.

Simple and spiritual in their nature, there is no place where the observances of Christianity may not be performed, and performed with acceptance. The proofs of this are coeval with its origin. How unlike to the spacious halls and the lofty arches of the Jewish temple was the upper room in which the members of the first Christian church were accustomed to meet! Yet it was there that the principal prediction respecting New Testament times was fulfilled—that what was spoken by Joel, and reiterated by a greater prophet, was verified. "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like unto fire, and it sat upon each of them." How inferior even to the accommodations of the upper room were the circumstances of Paul and Silas in the prison of Philippi, and of John in the isle of Patmos! But it was in the former of these cases that the devout exercises of these holy prisoners were heard

by God, as well as by their companions in bonds; and it was in the latter case that the privileges of the seraph were conferred on the saint, that the veil was removed from the beloved disciple which concealed things future, and things celestial from his sight. We admit that these things occurred in an age in which the administration of religion was in some respects supernatural, but there was nothing peculiar to that age in the acceptance of the services of these primitive confessors. This was in no degree connected with the religious character of the *place*. When in later periods the true worshippers of the Father have been similarly situated in regard to outward accommodations, we doubt not but their services have been equally pleasing in the sight of heaven. Far different from the circumstances in which you are now placed was the lot, at a former period, of the godly in our own land. Theirs was not "the religion of cathedrals," or "the religion of churches," or even "the religion of barns." It was on many occasions the den and the cave which responded to the sounds of their devotions. But these devotions, springing from faith, and hallowed by suffering, mingled with the hallelujahs of angels, and the anthems of the spirits of the just. Nor are these remarks to be confined to periods of persecution, or to the religious services of those who were its victims. We doubt not that there are thousands at this moment engaged in the undisturbed observance of the same ordinances with ourselves, in places which have been subjected to no forms of ecclesiastical consecration, and which have not been even exclusively appropriated to religious exercises, whose services will come up as "a memorial before God." And the period, if we mistake not the meaning of prophecy, is fast approaching when the universal character of Christian worship will be still farther and more strikingly illustrated in the *restoration* of that people to whose local religious predilections our text specifically refers. It is not necessary to the fulfilment of the predictions, respecting that restoration, that the Jews should literally return to their own

land, any more than it is necessary, according to the literal import of some other predictions, that all nations should be assembled for worship in the ancient capital of the Jews. When these wandering outcasts shall look, with penitence, to Him whom their fathers pierced, their predicted restoration will be effected. In whatever place, or under whatever circumstances they are, they may then be said to be worshippers in Zion, and to be inhabitants of Jerusalem. Spiritual in their nature, their thanksgivings shall be "as incense," and the lifting up of their hands as the evening and morning sacrifice.

"By foreign streamers they'll cease to roam,  
Nor weeping think on Jordan's flood;  
In every clime they'll find a home,  
In every temple see their God."

"Neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, shall men worship the Father; but the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

1st. In the exercises of God's house let us guard against a *superstitious* spirit.

The gross superstition of the Jew and Samaritan, to which the text refers, is not the error into which, at the present time, we are most likely to fall. It may be presumed that there are few or none present who adopt the opinion that any circumstances of local character, or any forms of ecclesiastical consecration, can possess or impart any spiritual efficacy. All of us, however, are in danger of laying too much stress upon the mere externals of religion. A very undue importance is often attached to the mere outward act by which we are initiated into the profession of Christianity. There are many who would be shocked at the idea of a child remaining unbaptized, who would feel no compunction in the habitual neglect of all practical solicitude for the spiritual interests of their offspring. Equally unscriptural and delusive is the confidence which is frequently derived from participating in the ordinance of the supper. To that ordinance it is too common to apply the language, and with the language the ideas,

of a popish ritual, and to suppose that there is a higher degree of acceptance in this than in any other divine appointment; and that this is necessarily connected with the mere act of observing it. These are opinions which the mode of its celebration, and the instructions which accompany it, have not always a tendency to counteract. The difference is palpably striking between the language of those who speak of *high communion sabbaths*, and the phraseology which describes the commemorative rite by the simple designation of "breaking of bread," and which classes it with "the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and prayer." We need not say which of the two it is safer to adopt. No greater benefit can be derived from a formal observance of the supper than from a formal observance of any other institution of the gospel. The religion of the soul is the soul of religion. If the heart is not right, no ordinance, however scriptural, can be acceptable. If the heart is right, it will give a value to every ordinance of divine appointment.

2d. In the exercises of God's house let us guard against a *formal spirit*.

To the importance of what are termed the sealing ordinances of our religion nothing disparaging is intended in the remarks which have been now made. Baptism, whether administered by immersion or effusion, whether an adult or an infant is the subject of it, is an impressive rite. By the application to the body of that element which cleanses from natural defilement, it exhibits to the eye the necessity of the spiritual purification of the soul, and points to the religion, of which it is the introductory ordinance, as being the instrument in the hand of the Spirit of effecting this purification. "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." The lessons symbolically inculcated in the ordinance of the supper are not less important. The doctrines which it shadows forth and impresses on the mind are of the life of godliness. It is calculated to affect us deeply with the evil of sin, the love and condescension of the Saviour, and our obligations to serve him. But

for this purpose it must be something more than an outward observance. "Bodily exercise profiteth little." The mere participation of bread and wine is not communicating. The fact which was intended to be exhibited in this commemorative rite must be remembered. The scene of Calvary must be realized. The death of Jesus, not so much in its tragic and sentimental as in its religious and doctrinal aspect and interest, must be present to our minds. Strangers to these feelings, you are symbolizing with the condemned practices of the church of Corinth. You liken a religious ordinance to an ordinary meal. You do not "discern the Lord's body."

3d. In the exercises of the house of God let us guard against a *bigoted spirit*.

The devotional language and feelings of the first Christian worshippers were eminently catholic. It was not on those churches only to which the pastors ministered, on which they invoked blessings from on high, but on "all that in every place called upon the name of Jesus Christ, their Lord." We come short of the catholicism of their language, and still more of the catholicism of their spirit. In none of the services of the house of God is this deficiency more discernible than in that which of all others required the predominance of opposite feelings. If the fence, as it has been sometimes called, which it is customary to draw round a sacramental table, had been intended to exclude none but those who were wanting in the principles, tempers, and conduct essential to the character of the Christian, it had been well. We cannot too frequently, or too earnestly, impress on persons of this description that their commemoration of our Redeemer's death is unwarranted. The *free communion* for which we contend is not to be confounded with a *promiscuous, indiscriminate communion*. But it is not to the irreligious and immoral that the sentence of exclusion has been confined. In some cases it has been extended to all, however excellent their character, who had not the sectarian impress of the administrator of the ordinance. It is time that usages so unsuited to our commu-



nion exercises should be abolished and forgotten. The table at which you commemorate your redemption is not *yours*. It is not the table of a sect or of a party. It is the *Lord's*. It was the design, as it is the obvious tendency, of the ordinance of the supper to cherish unity of affection—to make us feel while we outwardly recognise the ties which bind us to the Christian brotherhood. We best fulfil the intentions of the Divine Apportioner of this service—we add equally to the pleasure and profit to be derived from it, when these brotherly feelings are indulged; when, dismissing every bigoted and sectarian sentiment from our hearts, we view it as “the communion of saints”—when our Christian affection is as wide as the terms of acceptance—when we can say, with the same sincerity with which the words were originally uttered, “Grace be with all who love the Lord Jesus Christ.” You are insulting, instead of honouring your Redeemer, if you can approach the ordinance of love without love in your hearts—if you can raise your walls of partition and separation in the very act of commemorating an event which was intended to break them down, and to introduce the faithful of every place, and of every name, “through one Spirit unto the Father.”

4th. In the exercises of God's house let us guard against a *slavish* spirit.

In those who have no revelation to assure them of forgiveness, the spirit of terror and bondage is what we are led to expect. In some periods of their history it was not surprising in the Jews themselves. When Sinai exhibited the awful appearances which bespoke a present Deity, when the cloud rested on it, and the thunders rolled, and the lightning played on its hoary summit, we do not wonder that the spectators should have trembled. When a similar manifestation was made to Elijah, in the cave on Horeb, it was natural that he should cover his face with his mantle. Equally natural was it, though it was only in vision, that when the Lord appeared to Isaiah, on a throne high and lifted up, he should have exclaimed, “Wo is me, for I am . . . ; for I am a man of unclean lips.”

But this spirit ill becomes us who are called to “the adoption of sons”—who hear not the thunder of an introductory economy, but “the still, small voice” of a sublimer dispensation. The trembling apprehensions which would be appropriate in approaching a throne of judgment, befit you not in approaching a throne of grace. Least of all do they befit you in exercises in which more than in any other they prevail—the exercises in which are displayed before you the symbols of your redemption, and the pledges of your forgiveness. It is joy, not terror, which on such an occasion becomes you—joy, that “the flaming sword” has been removed from the entry to the celestial paradise—that we have not “a high-priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities;” who on earth suggested the apology for his disciples, “the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak,” and whom we can approach in the confidence that, at his Father's right hand, he is still making it for us.

Imagine not, my brethren, that the possession of this filial confidence is the property only of a privileged few of the children of God, and that there must be a long course of religious services before you can be entitled to appropriate the promises on which this confidence is founded. If we wait till we are entitled on the footing of merit to do this, we shall never enjoy the privilege. The exhibition of the divine mercy to sinners, and to backsliders, as well as others, will authorize you to appropriate them immediately, though it is in the spirit of penitence, and in the intention of obedience, that the appropriation is to be made, and though it is only in the practice of obedience that it can be scripturally maintained. Take then to yourselves the comfort which the invitations and promises of the gospel are so well fitted to impart; and when, in the devotional exercises of this house, you draw near to the Great Object of worship, in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, let it be under the elevating and encouraging recollection that it is to “his Father and your Father, to his God and your God.”

## SERMON LIV.

### THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT.

BY THE REV. W. R. TAYLOR, A.M.

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“Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”—Eph. vi. 17.

MANY and important are the uses which the word of God serves, and many and interesting are the views in which it is exhibited to us. It is the instrument of our conviction, and conversion, and sanctification, and consolation, and growth in grace. By it we are wounded, and healed, and enlightened, and revived, and strengthened. It is the *fire* which consumes our dross, and burns up our refuges of lies. It is the *hammer* which breaks our flinty hearts, and makes them contrite and pliable. It is the *incorruptible seed* by which we are born again; by which that life is implanted in our souls, which shall flourish without decay throughout eternal ages. It is the *food* by which this life is sustained on earth; the *sincere milk* by which, as new-born babes, we are nourished, and grow up unto the stature of perfect men in Christ. It is a *lamp* unto our feet and a *light* unto our path: the *light* which discovers to us the path to glory, honour, and immortality; which makes known to us the way of life, the narrow way, the way everlasting; the *lamp* which guides our steps through the wilderness, which shows us the dangers with which on every hand we are beset, and so enables us to avoid them. It is the *mirror* in which we behold the glory of the Lord, on which we have a delineation of the person, and the personal beauty, and excellence, and suitableness of the Lord of glory; and in contemplating which, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. It is the *oracle* to which we may have recourse in every

season of doubt and difficulty; the *Urim* and the *Thummim*, by which we may inquire of God, and have the way of truth and the path of duty made clear and plain before us. It is the *casket* which contains the *pearl* of great price; the *field* in which the gospel treasure is hid; the *golden urn* in which is laid up the *hidden manna*. It is the *record* of Jehovah's promises; the *register* of his dealings and of his works of wonder; the *testamentary deed* in which the benefits of the Saviour's purchase are bequeathed to us; and so, the *charter* of our inheritance, the *bond* which secures our enjoyment of it. It is also, as we here learn, the *weapon* by which we overcome all the enemies that would oppose us in our Christian course, and would prevent us from reaching the promised land. They overcame him, (it is said of those who are before the throne,) they overcame the enemy by the blood of the Lamb, and by the *word* of their testimony. It is the Christian's *sword*, a weapon which he must have ever ready, which he must have ever girded by his side, that he may be prepared at all times to make use of it, as occasion serves. Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

The sword of the Spirit. The reasons why the word of God is thus named, must be very obvious. They are two chiefly.

1. The Spirit of God is its author, the maker of this sword. It was he who framed and polished it. In plain terms, it was he who testified in the prophets and apostles; it was he who moved them

to speak and to write, and taught them what to say and record. Let this dispose us to value this weapon,—it is of heavenly manufacture. Satan's darts are forged in hell, and are impregnated with its fire. This is a weapon which has come down from heaven, the workmanship of him, by whose fingers the heavens and all the host of them were framed. The ancients feign, that some of their warriors had been provided with heavenly armour—armour which was proof against every mortal weapon. This every Christian warrior *really* has.

2. It is the sword of the *Spirit*, because it is his agency which makes it effectual, and because by it, as an instrument, his agency is brought to bear on the soul,—it is the ministration of the Spirit,—it is ever accompanied by his Almighty power. Hence it is called quick and powerful, hence it is called spirit and life. Some persons call the word of God a dead letter. It is never so called by the Spirit who indited it. It is spoken of invariably as a word of life and light and power,—it is spoken of as a sharp two-edged sword. Why then, it may be asked, is it so often ineffectual? We answer, properly speaking, it is never ineffectual. Would you call a sword ineffectual because it did no execution in cases where it was not made use of or applied? Would you say that it was in itself a powerless weapon, because it must be laid hold of, and pulled out of the scabbard, and wielded by the arm, ere its power can be manifested? surely not. Now let the word of God be but embraced and made use of, and it is invariably the power of God unto salvation, it is invariably made effectual for the production of those glorious ends which it was intended to produce. It is not from any defect or powerlessness in it, as some would insinuate, but from our not applying and using it, that these ends are not always effected. Let the gospel be brought to bear, let its power be but tried, and it will soon be manifested what power it possesses. In ascribing to it this power, we exclude not, of course, the agency of the Spirit of God. On the contrary, we say, that it is because it is

the appointed instrument of bringing his agency to bear, that it possesses this power. On this very account it is, that it is quick and powerful; and on this account, it is here fitly styled the sword of the *Spirit*,—not only the sword of his framing, but the sword which his power renders effectual.

This sword of the Spirit, this weapon of truth, we are here directed to *take* and use, as a chief part of our armour in the Christian warfare. For discovering how, and for what ends, we are to do so, it may be well for us, in the first instance, to consider it as made use of by the great Captain of our salvation.

It was necessary as a part of his sufferings in our stead, necessary as a means of bruising the serpent's head and of triumphing over him, and for other important ends in the scheme of our salvation, that our surety should be assailed by the tempter,—should be assailed by Satan as the serpent, as well as by Satan as the devouring lion. Hence we are told that Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. In this season of trial it was, as you know, this sword of the Spirit, which our victorious leader then wielded, and by which he put the tempter to flight. "Thus it is written," was his answer to each insinuation urged; and to that answer Satan could not, and durst not reply. He could not abide the edge of this sword. Satan, you will remember, never attempted to answer our Lord's quotation of Scripture. He received that at once as a defeat; and instead of urging further the temptation, in answer to which the quotation was made, he straightway had recourse to *another* temptation. In this latter way, indeed, he tried his utmost might, he had recourse to the most powerful weapons he could use, but he found them utterly ineffectual. He found that not the slightest impression could be made; yea, he found himself answered, in each case, in a way that precluded further attack. He found the edge of a sword turned to him, by which his own weapons were broken, and before which he was himself compelled to fly.

But Christ did more than repel Satan's

attacks, and make him retire defeated from the contest. He carried war into his dominions, he attacked his strongholds and destroyed his works,—on his cross he bruised the serpent's head. By his death he destroyed death, and him that had the power of death, even the devil,—defeated his master-device, and *procured* deliverance for the captives who were under his power. This deliverance he now in his exalted state applies and renders effectual. It was not enough that he procured for his people a title to deliverance; he must, and he does, by the power of his might, by the putting forth of his strong hand, and of his outstretched arm, grant them *actual* deliverance from their state of bondage. Now this sword is the weapon which he wields for this purpose. This is the rod of his strength, which he sends out of Zion, and by which he makes a willing people in a day of his power. By this he continues to bruise the serpent's head, for by this he rescues sinners from his power. By this he makes Satan quit his hold of them, and brings them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. By this he still goes forth conquering and to conquer; and with reference to this, may we address him in the Psalmist's words:—"Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty; and in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things,"—terrible things to thine enemies, while salvation is brought to thy redeemed. These ever go together. The day of vengeance, said Christ, is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. The day of Christ's death was peculiarly this; but so also is the day in which his word is glorified, and sinners, by believing it, are saved. My friends, little as we may think of the word of God, the sword of the Spirit, it is the terror as well as the torment of hell. When Christ sent out his seventy disciples armed with it,—sent them forth preaching the gospel of the kingdom, he said to them on their return, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Satan knows that his kingdom

cannot stand before it; and therefore it may well be a terror to him, when he sees him, who is most mighty, girding this sword upon his thigh, and coming forth to use it with his glory and with his majesty.

Now this sword, which the Lord himself, the glorious leader in the spiritual warfare, made use of, and does still make use of, in the ways we have declared, we, who call ourselves his followers, the soldiers of Christ Jesus, are *after* his *example* to make use of also. We are to take and use it, as he did, *for repelling Satan's temptations*, and *for actually destroying his works*.

1. When Satan comes to assault us, we are, as Christ our great pattern and example did, to take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and with that weapon to oppose him. It is surely for our instruction and imitation, as well as for our encouragement in thinking of his triumph, that our Lord's contest with our great adversary is so minutely recorded. Yes, as in his conquest, he has given us grounds of rejoicing, seeing he conquered for us, so in the manner of his conquest, he hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps. He has shown us in what way we are to answer Satan, and with what arguments we are to repel his solicitations. We are not to reason with him, but to have recourse at once to the law and to the testimony. Satan can abide our reasoning, nay, most likely, if we contend with him on that ground merely, he will soon be able to overpower us, he will soon succeed in taking away this armour in which we trust, and in turning it against ourselves. But the word of God he cannot abide. This sword of the Spirit, wielded in the hand of faith, compels him to withdraw. Darkness is his element, and the light and purity of truth he cannot away with. With whatever violence he comes against us, though, as the prophet expresses it, he comes in like a flood, yet, if the standard of the Spirit of the Lord be raised up against him, he is instantly driven back with confusion. What have we to do then, but to endeavour to become well acquainted with this tried wea-

pon, and to be much in exercising it, that we may become ready and expert in using it. In plain terms, to increase in our knowledge and faith and love of the word of God, and to be much in meditating on its declarations and commands and promises, that we may know how we ought to answer Satan when he comes to assault and seduce us.

2. But we are to aim, not merely at the repelling of Satan's attacks, but at the *positive* destruction of his power. Christ came to *destroy* the works of the devil; and in this also, we are to be followers of our glorious Head. We are to take our allotted part in this holy war. We are to aim at the destruction of the works of the devil, wherever they exist, by every means in our power.

First. In an especial manner, and in the first instance, we are to aim at the destruction of these works *in ourselves*. This is a chief and an essential point in which Christ's contest with the enemy differs from ours. He came as the holy One of God, to destroy sin in others: but he knew no sin himself. He was manifested to put away our sin; but in him was no sin. He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, but, yea for that very reason, it was necessary that the devil should have nothing in him. The contest between him and Satan was a contest between light and darkness, between holiness and sin. On the one side, sin in all its malignity, on the other, holiness pure and unsullied as the light of day, or rather as the light which surrounds the throne of the Eternal, in which is no darkness at all. Say not that this destroys the analogy between the head and the members, as if his warfare and theirs were thus made of a *totally* different character. There is a close analogy notwithstanding. Do but consider how the case is. There are two great combatants, Christ and Satan, the holy One of God, and the wicked one. When Christ rescues a sinner from the power of the enemy, and implants a principle of holiness in his heart, then a contest, similar to the mighty one which he carries on with Satan, commences in that heart. The new man, the creation of Christ's Spirit, becomes

opposed to the old man, the seed of the serpent yet remaining in the soul. Now it is only the *new* man, the *new* nature, which, in itself, however weak it may be, is essentially and only holy—which is related to Christ. That is his workmanship, and it is renewed after the image of him that created it. The old man has no relation to Christ. It is connected with the serpent; it is part of his seed, and is that which is to be destroyed. It is as possessing a *new* nature, that any individual becomes a combatant in this holy war; and it is as possessing a new nature, that he becomes at all connected with Christ as his head and his Lord; and it is as possessing a new nature, and not as possessing a new nature and an old, that he has any conformity to Christ, or that any resemblance between him and Christ is to be traced: and it is because the new nature is the reigning principle in the soul; because the individual, in speaking of the old man, can say, not I, but sin that dwelleth in me; it is on this account, that in his personal character, he is ranked with the seed of the woman, and not with the seed of the serpent. The analogy between Christ and believers consists, not in the resemblance of their whole moral constitution, but in the resemblance of the new nature implanted in them, to his. To assert differently were to assert, that the Son of God was manifested in our nature and as the head of his body the church, to the end that he the head might be conformed to the members, instead of the members being conformed to him. We speak, you will observe, not of essential humanity, in which respect Christ was in all things made like unto his brethren; but of holiness or sinfulness of nature, in which respect, he was not made like unto them, but they are to be made like unto him.

My friends, this is the prize of our high calling, to be made like unto the Son of God, to have our nature assimilated to his—to have the human nature as it exists in us, conformed to what it was, and is, in him. In him it existed in more than its original purity. The purity of the snow is not to be compared with its unsullied spotlessness, as it was assumed

and maintained by him. Now to this we are to aspire; and, though it belongs to the Spirit of Christ—that Spirit, who was on him without measure, and who, if we are Christ's, dwells in us also—to carry us onward towards this state of perfection, and to purify us, even as Christ was pure, it belongs to us to make use of the means that are appointed, and which he blesses, for promoting this end. The Spirit works by means and instruments, and he works in us to will and to do. Now the word of the gospel is the great means of our sanctification, “sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.” “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” Let us make use of this word, then, for promoting our cleansing; or to return to the metaphor in our text, let us take the sword of the Spirit, that we may slay the remaining corruptions of our hearts, that we, through the Spirit, may mortify the deeds of the body, that we may crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. Oh! there is much of the seed of the serpent, many of the works of the devil *within us*; and nothing but this weapon will destroy them. As it was by the manifestation of the Son of God, in our nature, that a death-blow was given to Satan's cause, and the destruction of his works secured; so it is by the manifestation of the Son of God in our hearts—and what is the sword of the Spirit, the word of truth, but just a manifestation of Christ and a revelation of his glory?—it is by the manifestation of the Son of God in our hearts, by the sword of the Spirit applied to our corruptions, that these corruptions, these works of the devil, are destroyed within us. Let us make use of this weapon then for this end.

2. But the works of the devil, wherever they appear, as well as in ourselves, are to be the object of our opposition and our enmity. Wherever they appear, we are to aim at their destruction, and, for this purpose, to take to ourselves the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. In this point of view we mention two cases particularly in which this sword is to be used by us, in opposing error, and in seeking the conversion

of our fellow-sinners from sin to God.

In *opposing error* we are to use this sword. Truth is an object worth the contending for. We are exhorted and commanded to contend earnestly in maintaining it. We are to resist, if need be, even unto blood. Error, on the other hand, especially if it be dangerous in its tendency and consequences, we are as earnestly and as strenuously to oppose. Error as well as sin is of the devil. It is a chief work of the devil, a chief work of his kingdom. It is one of the works which Christ came to destroy, and which we, therefore, as his followers, are to seek to destroy also. And how are we to do so? Not by carnal weapons, not by railing accusations, but by the sword of the Spirit, the weapon of truth. This is the only weapon of attack with which the Christian soldier is to gird himself, in fighting the battles of his faith. He has nothing to do with any other. He need not regret that circumstance, however; for this is the most powerful he can use. He may say of it, as David did of the sword of Goliath, “There is none like it.” Let error be but met by an exhibition of the truth, and it cannot maintain its ground. For a time, indeed, it may rear its Gorgon head, but the truth must at length prevail. It is the nature of light to dissipate darkness; it is the nature of light to make itself, and every thing else, manifest: and so it is of truth. Let truth be clearly exhibited in opposition to error, and error must fall before it—like Dagon before the ark of the Lord. It can be maintained, by those only who do not come to the light, or who voluntarily shut their eyes.

In *seeking the conversion of sinners*, as in contending against error, this same weapon of truth is to be employed. The conversion of sinners is a principal mean of Satan's defeat, a principal mean of promoting the ends of that warfare, in which, if we are Christ's soldiers, we have engaged—of promoting the glory of God, the destruction of sin, and the advancement of holiness and happiness. Of course every true soldier of Christ Jesus seeks these ends. He is anxious for the glory

of his Lord, for the prosperity of his kingdom, and for additional trophies to the power and riches of his grace. He is anxious for the destruction of the reign of sin. He is anxious for the triumphs of holiness. He is anxious to see his fellow-creatures, who are deluded by Satan, and carried captive by him at his will, rescued from his thralldom, and numbered among the followers of the Lamb. Now this sword of the Spirit, as we have already observed, is the instrument by which these glorious ends are effected. Shall we not seek then to make use of it in this view, as we have opportunity? Shall we not arm ourselves in such a contest, and for so glorious an end? And shall we not pray and endeavour, that others may be incited and fitted to go forth thus armed also against the common enemy. If we wish to make any triumphs in this warfare, or rather if we desire to be instruments in any way, however feeble and despised, of adding to the triumphs of our Redeemer, let us seek to be instruments in bringing this sword—the sword which he who is most mighty girds upon his thigh—into contact with our fellow-sinners around us; and let us feel honoured in any, even the slightest instrumentality, that may be granted us in producing that end.

For these important purposes then,—even for repelling Satan's temptations, and for destroying his works in ourselves and others—are we to take this weapon, and all the other weapons of the Christian warfare; and so to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold of eternal life. My friends, there are but two parties in this warfare, and to one or other of these we all belong. Oh! which side have we espoused. Believe it, there is no neutrality. If we are not for Christ, we are against him. If we are not fighting under his standard, if we have not actively and warmly espoused his cause, we are his enemies, we are fighting against him, we are opposing the interests of his kingdom; and in that light,

even as his enemies, he regards us. "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, for they came not up to the help of the Lord—to the help of the Lord, against the mighty."

But have we espoused Christ's cause, or are we desirous of espousing it—of fighting under his standard, and following whithersoever he leadeth us, let us take the following directions and encouragements in doing so; and, in giving these, we conclude.

Let us know our own weakness. Let us not expect to vanquish our enemy, let us not presume to go and meet him, in our own strength.

Let us watch the motions of our enemy. Let us beware of indulging security, for he is active and subtle and powerful. Let us watch especially the movements of the party he has still within ourselves. Let us keep our hearts with all diligence.

Let us keep our eye fixed on our glorious leader. Let this be our motto, "Looking unto Jesus," looking unto him as our guide, our strength, our deliverer.

Let us keep in view the glorious prize set before us, the conqueror's crown. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

For encouraging us in this warfare, let us reflect that, if we have really taken part in it, our enemies are God's enemies. Therefore we may trust, that he will be with us; therefore we may trust that they shall be destroyed.

Let us reflect, that we have to do with an enemy who has been already conquered—whose head has been bruised, whose power has been broken, whose strongholds have been stormed.

Let us reflect, too, that this conquest has been achieved by *our* Kinsman-Redeemer, and for *our* benefit.

And lastly, that *he* has promised us protection and support—promised to deliver us from every evil work, and to preserve us unto his heavenly kingdom. Amen.

## SERMON LV.

THE INCONCEIVABLE GREATNESS AND UNSEARCHABLE GOODNESS OF GOD

BY THE REV. GEORGE CLAYTON.

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*"Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth? He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people."—Psalm cxlii. 5—8.*

THIS psalm contains an animating exhortation to praise God and give him the glory due to his name. This is a service, my brethren, at once reasonable and delightful; and it is, indeed, of universal obligation; not only incumbent on those who are visibly employed in the immediate service of God, but incumbent on all, at all times, in all places, and in all periods of the world's existence. Therefore, says the psalmist, "Praise ye the Lord, O, ye servants of the Lord, praise ye the Lord, from this time forth and evermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the Lord's name is to be praised." It certainly may be considered as one of the deepest and darkest features of our fallen nature, and an humbling evidence of the corruption which is to be found even in the best of men, that we should be generally so reluctant to engage in a work, pleasurable and profitable, honourable to God and edifying to others. Although we are reluctant in our praises, we are eloquent in our complaints. When we detail our miseries, how fluent, how voluble, how little at a loss to detail the aggravation of our sorrows; but when we come to think of our miseries, how much of hard work have we to warm our cold hearts, to set them in tune for the praise of God—how much of excitement do we need to its enjoyment—how absolutely requisite is it that we should adopt the

language of the psalmist: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name; bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Is it not, my brethren, refreshing to look forward to the time when, by the copious effusion of the Holy Spirit in all among whom the name of God is mentioned, and by whom his benefits are participated, his praise shall be sung even from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same?

In order to incite to this needful and pleasurable occupation, the psalmist adduces two great motives, both of them derived from the attributes of the Divine Nature. The one, the greatness and majesty of God; the other, the goodness and mercy of God; and these are set forth before you in my text in admirable combination. We shall, however, consider them distinctively, that is, separately from each other; for there is that in the greatness of God which might overwhelm us with fear and trembling, and fill us with dismay and dread, if we were not to associate at the same time in our contemplations that view which he has given of his goodness and mercy in Christ Jesus our Lord. "Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high—who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the



dunghill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people."

*First*—I INVITE YOU TO MEDITATE BRIEFLY ON THE INCONCEIVABLE GREATNESS OF THAT GOD WITH WHOM YOU HAVE TO DO.

*Secondly*—TO CONSIDER HIS MATCHLESS AND INCOMPREHENSIBLE GOODNESS.

*Thirdly*—TO INQUIRE WHAT ARE THE PRACTICAL LESSONS WE MAY LEARN FROM THE UNITED DISPLAY OF BOTH.

May God seal instruction on every heart, and make us to become acquainted with the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

*First*—I INVITE YOU TO THE CONTEMPLATION OF HIS GREATNESS.

We should look unto "the Lord our God who dwelleth on high, and who must humble himself to behold the things that are in heaven and on earth." Consider, first, the place of his habitation—"He dwelleth on high." Secondly, his superiority to all the greatest of creatures and of things; "for he humbleth himself to behold the things that are done in heaven and on earth."

*First—Of his habitation.* We must be careful not to assign to the Deity any specific local limits; for God is a spirit, and his essence every where diffused. If we ascend up into heaven, he is there; if we make our abode in the abyss, he is there; if we should take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, even there his hand would uphold us, and his right hand would sustain us. But, with great propriety, heaven, and the heaven of heavens, though they cannot contain God's essence, are represented to us as the place of his immediate abode; there his glory dwells, and upon the inhabitants of that world, the angels of light and the spirits of the just made perfect, the emanations of his inexpressible majesty are continually poured forth: therefore they are said always to behold the face of their Father. This heaven is called the high and the holy place. I cannot tell you where it is; but I can tell you wherever God's presence is, especially in the immediate manifestation of it, there is heaven; for heaven is God, and God is heaven. It is always

represented to us as a place of superlative elevation, rising far above our utmost thought and the largest stretch of our imagination. "He dwelleth on high," far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named.

In the next place consider *his infinite superiority to the greatest of beings and the greatest of things.* "The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens, and he must humble himself to behold the things that are in heaven and on earth. "This is ascribing unutterable superiority to God over the greatest of beings and the greatest of things. There is something in national greatness made up of numbers, rank, intelligence, the order and arrangement of civil economy defended by mighty fleets and splendid armies, the councils of the kingdom guided by the wisdom and by the might of those who occupy seats of power and of authority. "God is above all nations, all nations in his sight are but as the drop of the bucket, and the small dust of the balance, and he taketh up the isles as a very little thing, and Lebanon is not sufficient to burn for him, and all nations are before him less than nothing, and vanity." Then consider the heavenly bodies which roll over us in splendour and in brightness. Look at the sun, whose golden beams you now participate and enjoy; think of the moon, walking in her brightness; mark the planetary system; see the innumerable hosts which spangle the firmament of the clouds, and consider all these suns as systems—and that all these stars are only so many worlds; and then carry your thoughts higher still, and remember that God has set his glory above the heavens, the clouds are the dust of his chariot, and the stars and suns are the pavement of his feet—then you will see he is under the necessity of stooping even to observe the things that are done in heaven, as you have expressed it in the hymn which introduced the discourse:

"Still might he fill his starry throne,  
And please his ears with Gabriel's song."

But oh! he must stoop to listen to those

songs, and the purest and loftiest angel that stands in the presence of God is so far removed beneath him, that he must bend his throne to see and hear the worship of the cherubim and seraphim. How much more must he stoop, then, to behold the things that are done on the earth, things of the greatest interest—things that in our view swell into the mightiest importance; all these he cannot notice without an amazing step of condescension, so high is his elevation, and so unutterable is his grandeur. This is a wide theme, but a theme at which we might labour from the commencement of our lives to the close, without exhausting the subject, and without having gained even a thousandth part of that knowledge of God which stands connected with his immeasurable greatness: “Who can by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?” Therefore I pass on,

*Secondly*—To NOTICE HIS MATCHLESS GOODNESS.

This will appear in the description of my text: that “He humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and on earth. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people.” But I shall apply these representations to three distinct provinces of the Divine agency. The first is, to the ministrations of his kind providence especially in favour of the poor and oppressed. Secondly, the manifestations of his grace to our fallen and ruined nature. Thirdly, in the revelations of his kingdom when time shall be no more.

First—we apply this representation to *the ministrations of his providence*. There is, be assured, a particular providence which notices all individuals, and which regulates and superintends their concerns. The greatest is not above the notice of God’s eye, nor the meanest beneath it! “For are not the hairs of your head all numbered? Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and not one of them is forgotten before God.” “He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the

needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people.” Was not this exemplified in the case of Joseph, who was sold for a slave into the land of Egypt, condemned under a false accusation to an ignominious prison, where his feet were hurt with fetters, and the iron entered into his soul; and yet God remembered him, raised him from the dust, took him from the dungeon, gave him the second chariot in the land of Egypt; and they cried, “bow the knee, bow the knee!” before him; and only in the throne was his great master greater than he. Was not this singularly exemplified in the case of Hannah, who was a woman of a sorrowful spirit, who bent her knee in all the urgency of importunate prayer, lying in the dust at the footstool of divine majesty; and, ere long, her sorrows were chased away, the dark clouds which enveloped her broke asunder and departed, and gave way to the bright shining of a clear and cheerful day, so that she herself adopted this very song of praise which is recorded in the language of the text? I might refer to Ruth the Moabitess, whose history is but an illustration of the doctrine of my text. I might refer to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon. I might refer to Daniel and his remarkable history, and to the Virgin mother herself, who, though of royal descent, was found in a condition of extreme poverty; but she was raised out of the dust, and lifted from the dunghill, and had the distinguished honour of giving birth to the Messiah, so that she said, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour; for he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden; for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.” Time would fail me to tell of the particular instances in which the language of my text has been practically fulfilled, in which God has taken the poor from the dust, from cottages of obscurity, from thatched roofs, and from places of extreme depression and gloom, and “placed

them with princes, even the princes of his people." So that, as a doctrine of providence, and as an illustration of God's hand in ordering the affairs of his providential kingdom, we may consider that the language of the text is most apt and just.

Secondly, let us apply this to the *manifestations of his grace*: "He hath remembered his nation's low estate, for his mercy endureth for ever." What was the condition of man as a sinner when the eye of God contemplated his recovery, and the bowels of his compassion melted over his misery? It was a state of the greatest possible degradation, the lowest dust was his abode: no dunghill can adequately represent the deep depression and utter ruin in which, by reason of sin, we are all found. And how, I ask, was our elevation from this state of degradation and ruin effected? Why the eternal Son of God took upon him our nature in the lowest circumstances of its degradation; he became a poor man, was born in a stable, laid in a manger at Bethlehem, worked at a menial occupation, lived a life of dependence, and was at last indebted to charity for his grave. It was by this stupendous act of condescension that our Lord redeemed us from the curse of God, saved us from our bitter wo, and raised us to sit together with him in heavenly places. Oh, how astonishing the humiliation of the eternal Son of the Most High! Well may it be said by the apostle, "He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." See the Lord of life and glory bowing his head upon the accursed tree, while he exclaimed, "It is finished!" See him laid even in the dust of death, and remaining under the power of the grave, for a time darkness his curtain, and his bed the earth! Wondrous dispensation of mercy—

"That thy eternal Son should bear  
To take a mortal form;  
Made lower than the angels are,  
To save a dying worm!"

Then consider, I pray you, not only the general scheme of our recovery by grace divine, through the humiliation, and suffering, and death, and burial of the Divine Redeemer, but consider the manner in which this salvation is applied by the sovereign and gracious operations of the Holy Spirit. Now you will perceive that, generally, the poor are evangelized: "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom?" The objects of his special favour are generally found among those who, of all others, seem least likely or fitted for the distinction which he is pleased to put upon them. Look at Mary Magdalen; see her brought to the feet of Jesus, bathing those feet with her tears, wiping them with the hair of her head, and then following Jesus into the wilderness. Oh, how truly is it written: "He humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in earth—he raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people!"

Look at Saul of Tarsus breathing out threatenings of slaughter. Oh, what a state of wretched depravity was his heart found in when the message of Jesus arrested him in his course! he heard a voice, he saw a light, and he fell, trembling, to the earth, exclaiming, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The degraded persecutor (for man never appears in a more degraded form than when he persecutes the church of Christ) became an ardent believer of the faith which he once laboured to destroy; and he says, "Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." Therefore he could say: "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am the chief." "Though ye have been among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." The depth of human depression, in a moral and a spiritual sense,

exemplifies the wonderful depth of the Divine humiliation and the Divine goodness.

Thirdly, we apply this to the *revelations of eternity*. God has done much for his people in the application of the great blessings of salvation to them here; but "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, what he hath prepared for them that love him" in the world to come. My brethren, assist me by your meditations to draw aside the curtain which hides eternal things from our view. Think of the fulfilment of this representation in the morning of the resurrection, when from abodes of dust, and from houses of clay, God shall call the slumbering remains of his people into life, and warm them into activity, and clothe them with beauty, according to the mighty power whereby he is able to subdue even all things unto himself. "Thy dead men shall live together, with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs; and the earth shall cast out the dead:" "For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." Then will he "raise up the poor out of the dust, and lift the needy out of the dunghill," that he may set him on the throne of the Lamb, and encircle him with a diadem of glory.

Consider the associations of that great day, when all the redeemed of the Lord shall meet from the east, from the west, from the north, and from the south—shall be gathered together in one holy, happy, harmonious throng, all crowned, all enthroned, all adorned with bright garments of shining lustre and spotless purity, and shall wave palms of triumph, and join in the everlasting song of "salvation unto the Lamb." There the humblest and meanest believer shall find himself on an equal footing, in point of locality, and in

point of enjoyment, with the venerable patriarchs, with the inspired prophets, with the noble army of martyrs, with the confessors, and with those who in every age have been distinguished for their life, their love, their holiness, and their zeal. We are ready to say, The meanest place at thy right hand is infinitely too high. But there is no mean place there; all will be princes, all will be sitting at one common table, and all will be the subjects of one inconceivable and incomparable satisfaction. I do not deny that there may be degrees of glory arising out of the physical and moral capacities of our nature. I can hardly conceive that an infant dying in its infancy shall be found in the same scale of precise enjoyment with St. Paul or St. John, with a Watts, a Doddridge, a Hall, a Porteus; but though, in the very nature of things, there may be gradations as to the peculiar measure of enjoyment, every mind will be full of purity, full of bliss, and full of glory—as full as it can hold—while it will be stretching forth, by the enlargement of its powers, to the still larger enjoyment of an object whose excellencies can never be exhausted, and whose boundless extent will admit of a constant and eternal progression, both in knowledge, resemblance, and enjoyment.

Now what an amazing discovery will this be, when we shall see heaven opened, and when we shall see poor, degraded, ruined man "taken from his dust, and raised from his dunghill, and made to sit with princes, even the princes of immortality."

In conclusion, WHAT PRACTICAL LESSONS MAY WE LEARN FROM THE COMBINED OR ASSOCIATED DISPLAY OF THE GREATNESS AND GOODNESS OF GOD.

In the first place, my brethren, let it fix on our minds a *deep sense of our own insignificance, meanness, and vileness*. You will go away from the contemplation of this subject little benefited, unless you find that it is fitted to cast down every high thought, and every proud imagination, unless it levels your own pretensions with the dust, and unless you are led from the contemplation of God's greatness to learn the lesson of your own littleness.

tleness, did I say, your own nothingness. Contrast yourself for a moment with the great Object you have been contemplating; think of the majesty and glory, the elevation and excellence of the blessed God; you then sink down in the dust of self-abasement, and say, as Job said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eyes seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." "Wo is me! for I am undone, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." Oh, what a self-annihilating subject is this! what a blow to all those self-preferring, self-exalting, self-endearing thoughts which are prone to take possession of the platform of the human heart! I am sure, if you rightly understand the subject of this afternoon, there will be little room left for self in your meditations and prayers. We should go from this subject smiting our heart, and acknowledging that we are less than nothing, and vanity; saying in the language of our old poet,

"The more thy glories strike my eye,  
The humbler servant I shall die."

O man, O woman, learn thy place from this subject! Remember that thou art only like an indivisible fraction of this great world which we inhabit, and that when compared with God you are lost. Where are you? The atom which now floats in the sunbeam is less considerable, compared with the mass of this solid globe, than you compared with your relation to the great and glorious God.

Secondly, the contemplation of this combined display of God's greatness and goodness *should promote reverence in worship*. Brethren, if God must humble himself to behold the things that are done in heaven and earth—if he is thus exalted above all beings, and above all things, however great—then surely we ought to worship him with reverence and with godly sincerity. "Great is the Lord and greatly to be feared, and to be had in reverence by all those who are round about him." Men cannot think aright of the greatness and grandeur of God who enter into the sanctuary with trifling and levi-

ty, who conduct themselves there in an undevout manner, and who retire from the house of God to forget where they have been and what they have been doing. "Keep thy foot when thou comest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to offer the sacrifice of fools." How would you conduct yourself in the presence of an earthly superior? What measure of awe would you feel, were you to be introduced to the sovereign of these realms, or to find yourself associated with the concentrated splendour of all the princes, powers, and potentates of earth? And yet who are all the powers, princes, and potentates on earth, compared with that great and glorious God into whose presence you enter in every prayer you offer, during every sermon you hear, and every religious exercise in which you join?

My dear young friends, there is always great danger lest the youthful heart should not be impressed with a sense of the majesty of God in the solemn exercises of his work; I therefore entreat you dear children who hear me—children of our weekly schools, and children of our Sabbath schools—always to consider the greatness of God whenever you come into his presence, and whenever you take his name on your lips, and remember to make a distinction between the house of God and all other houses—the day of God and all other days—the worship of God and all other employments; for he is not to be mocked, and if he sees a light and trifling countenance, and if he observes a light and trifling mind in his presence, he regards it with displeasure and abhorrence. Let us, then, in all acts of worship set the Lord before us in all his superlative elevation, majesty, and grandeur, that we may worship him reverently; "For to that man will I look, and with him will I dwell, who is of an humble and contrite heart, and who trembleth at my word."

Thirdly, let this subject *nourish in our bosoms confidence towards God*, as well as holy reverence in our dealings towards him. His goodness is equal to his greatness, and he has provided means whereby that goodness shall flow down to guilty

man, with infinite honour to his character and his perfections. Therefore let me say to you, have faith in God; consider his condescension; let it encourage your approaches, consider the ministrations of his providence—consider the manifestations of his grace—consider the future revelations of his glory. Then, my brethren, repose your spirits as in the bosom of God; for “he taketh the poor out of the dust, and lifeth the needy out of the dunghill.” Go to him with all your indigence and destitution, with all your moral degradation and pollution, with all your hopes and all your fears, and cast your every care and burden upon him who careth for you. There is no case in which you are warranted to despair of God’s gracious succour and seasonable help; there are no measures of depression to which the arm of his mercy will not reach; and there are no measures of public exaltation to which that arm may not conduct you. Believe, therefore, in God with all your heart; trust him with all your concerns. Remember that you cannot expect too much from him who is so great; neither can you hope for too much from him who is so good. “Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God.”

Fourthly, let this subject *scatter those doubts of scepticism, and those hesitations of infidelity, which are too industriously spread amongst us at the present day.* I would mention two points in connexion with this—the minute observation which God’s providence takes of the affairs of men, and the efficacy of believing prayer. “Oh,” says the sceptic, “do you think you are of sufficient importance in the vast chain of cause and effect for Deity to bestow a thought or care upon you? God is so great a being that he cannot find room in the vastness of his heart for your interests, for your concerns, for your sorrows, for your welfare.” This has been a favourite topic with infidelity in every period of time. The men of this school have attempted to destroy our faith in the doctrine of a particular providence; con-

tending that one event happeneth alike to all, and that every thing must be resolved to certain chances and accidents; and thus they endeavour to deprive us of a truth which is most full of consolation and godly relief, under all the trials, difficulties, and conflicts of this lower world. My brethren, God is indeed so great “that he humbleth himself to behold the things that are done in heaven and in earth.” He bestows his thoughts upon the poorest of his intelligent creatures: yea, the meanest, the irrational ones, and every insect that wings its way through the air, and every flower that is clothed with beauty and brightness, owes its existence and support to the immediate agency of the perfect will of Providence. Let my text establish your minds in the conviction of this truth.

So with regard to the efficacy of prayer, which arises out of this great principle. Can I believe that God hears my prayer? I am an atom of dust so inconceivably minute, in comparison with the great interests of his kingdom and government—will he listen to my voice? Will he attend to the breathing of my prayers? Will my solitary notes attract his ear or move his heart? Yes, when you are most alone, most despised, most in the dust, yea, when you feel yourself as upon the very dunghill, you may say, “poor though I am, despised and forgotten, yea God, my God, forgets me not.”

“He is safe, and must succeed,

For whom the Lord vouchsafes to plead.

Then put your cause into the hands of the great Intercessor—employ him—offer your praise to the Divine Majesty, and you have the pledge of God’s greatness, and the pledge of God’s goodness, that you shall in no wise be forgot. Therefore I say, away with the doubts of scepticism, and away with all insinuation of unbelief. “Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.”

Fifthly, let the contemplation of this subject *kindle in our breast a high and noble ambition*—not that sort of ambition which inflames the desires of worldly men who are in the pursuit of worldly

good, who are seeking to climb the steep acclivity which is to introduce them to sublunary honour and distinction; but seek that honour which cometh from God alone. Oh, pray that he may set you among princes, even the princes of his kingdom! Seek the honour of a church relationship here with the friends and followers of the Redeemer, and then you will be associated with them in the splendours of the future resurrection, and in the glories of the coming immortality! Oh that we may aspire to these noblest of all distinctions—honours that fade not, preferments that shall never, never perish, and an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away!

"This is my glory, Lord, to be  
Guided by saints, and near to thee."

"For they shall come from the east and the west, and the north and the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God."

Finally, let this subject *awaken both our gratitude, and our anticipations of the future*. Gratitude for the revelation God has given of himself, of his purposes, and of his grace—gratitude, if we ourselves have any thing answerable in our experience to that which we have been hearing this day—gratitude that we observe in the transactions of God's providence, and the economy of his grace, a minute fulfilment of all this in the cases of others. For charity envieth not; and he who is the subject of heaven-descended charity will be doubly blessed, because he will not only be happy in those gifts and distinctions which God has imparted to him, but he will be made happy by the gifts and distinctions which he sees imparted to others. Envy is the child of hell; and whenever it takes possession of the human bosom, it makes that bosom a hell: Christianity goes to extinguish

its fire, and it teaches every Christian to make every Christian's happiness his own. Therefore we shall, I am sure, be infinitely happier than we are, if we could act up to this great principle; if we could rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep; and when we see the poor raised out of the dust, and the needy taken from the dunghill, and set with princes, even the princes of God's people, we should rejoice and be exceeding glad. When the poor prodigal comes home, after he has wasted his substance, dishonoured his character, and nearly ruined his soul for ever, instead of grudging his reception and envying his entertainment, let us rather break forth into songs of joy and gladness, saying, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found." 'This is the benevolence of the spirits in heaven; for they tune their harps afresh when a sinner is converted, and when a soul is raised from the dust, from the natural apostasy of man, and made to sit with the princes of his people in the present joys of communion with the church on earth, and anticipating the future joys of the church triumphant in heaven. Let us warm our bosom's gratitude at the contemplation of this great subject, and anticipate the period when we shall be introduced to the city and fellowship of heaven, and shall see those kings, and prophets, and righteous men who have gone before us in the path of glory, and are now enjoying the rest that remains to the people of God.

"In such society as this  
My weary soul would rest;  
The man who dwells where Jesus is  
Must be for ever blest."

God grant us all such a dwelling place, through the countless ages of eternity, for Christ's sake. Amen.

## SERMON LVI.

### THE WITHERED LEAF.

BY THE REV. JOHN ANDERSON,

HELENSBURGH.

*"We all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities like the wind, have taken us away."—Isa. lix. 6.*

SPIRITUAL instructions are frequently conveyed to us in the Scriptures by images drawn from natural objects. In no book are the objects of nature more frequently introduced, for the explanation, the enforcement, and the illustration of truth, than in the book of God. To the eye of the inspired writers nature seems to have unfolded itself as one vast book of symbols, from which they read lessons to man adapted to the various junctures of life. This book of symbols may be said to have four chapters or leaves—the spring and the summer, autumn and winter. So far as the present year is concerned, the lessons of the spring, and the summer, and the autumn, are ended; its solemn lesson the winter is now reading. The fields that a short while ago were waving with their golden produce, are now barren and bare; the skies that were sunny and warm, are now cloudy and cold; the flowers that, wet with dew, opened their leaves to the sun, or shed their spicy fragrance on the winds, broken in their stem, and bruised in their leaves, are now fast turning into dust and dishonourable ashes; the trees of the wood and the field are now stripped of their foliage—their leaves that were lately fresh and green, now withered and brown, are falling to the ground, while the few that remain upon the branches seem but to wait for a ruder blast when they also shall be carried away. Such is the condition of the natural world: between this

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condition and our own is there any analogy? Is the condition of nature in any respect symbolic of our own? It is. The prophet in our text takes up a withered leaf, and, entering with it as it were into an audience of his countrymen, addresses them in these words—"We all do fade as a leaf." A withered leaf, then, is this day to be our preacher. What are some of the truths it proclaims, and in which it is wisely adapted and mercifully intended to instruct us? It instructs us in the following:—

1st. *The frailty and shortness of life.*

What object in nature is frailer than a withered leaf adhering to the bough by a single thread, and ready to be carried away by the first and feeblest breath of wind. Not more frail, however, is the withered leaf even, than is man that is born of a woman. Consider him in infancy: what object more frail than a human weakling—the infant in the cradle—the babe at the breast! Is it not the very type of all weakness and all frailty—full of wants, yet without the smallest power to supply them or to make them known; exposed to dangers which he does not foresee, and which, if he did, he could not control? If others do not feed him, he must perish of hunger; if others do not give him drink, he must perish of thirst; if others do not clothe him, he must perish of cold. Surely on the whole earth there is not a creature more frail and more helpless! Consider him in the pride and

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vigour of manhood: even in this period of life, how like a leaf wasted and driven by the wind! When he imagines his mountain stands strong, and that nothing can move him—when he exalts himself as a god, how weak, indigent, and insufficient—subject to every breath and to every blast! Is he on the sea!—see how 'ts waves whirl him where they will! Is he on the land!—see how the winds scorn his bidding, the storm how it mocks his prospects, the hurricane how it lays his dwelling in ruins! thus, even when standing, is he not liable to fall—when rich to become poor—when strong to become weak? In life is he not every moment liable and ready to die? Thus poor is man in his best estate; thus sure is it that “each man is vanity.” Consider him in old age: is the withered and wasted leaf of winter more withered or more wasted? His eyes how dim, his ear how dull, his limbs how shrunken, his breathing how short and how difficult; how like a walking shadow, a living death; the evil days have come upon him, he is fallen into the “sere and yellow leaf!” Such is man, in infancy, manhood, and old age; nor is he thus frail, but how shortlived as well as frail! To denote the shortness of man's existence, it is Jeremy Taylor, we think, who remarks that the wise men of the world have contended, as it were, who should denote its shortness by the fittest figures. By one it is likened to a shadow; by another to the shadow of a shade; by another to a vapour; by another to the swift ships; by another to the eagle that hasteth to its prey; by another to the weaver's shuttle: the day casts it to the night, and the night to the day, till the web of life is spun, and cut from the beam of time. By the prophet it is compared to a leaf. Short is the duration of a leaf: such, however, is the life of man—as short in its duration as it is frail in its texture and fading in its kind. In the withered leaves, then, that at this season of the year are strewing your path, see, my brethren, the emblem of your condition. Think not more highly of yourselves than you ought to do: look to that withered leaf; like it you are frail, and like it you are fading,

and like it you will soon be carried away for ever. If you shall be more deeply impressed with these truths this day than you have hitherto been; if you shall form a truer estimate of your condition than you may have hitherto done; if you shall be instructed more fully in, or be impressed more deeply with, the frailty and shortness of life, this leaf will not have faded and fallen, nor shall we have discoursed from it to you this day, in vain. But not only does the withered leaf instruct us in the conditions of life, it instructs us also in the conditions of death; and this it does,

First. *In the nature of death.*

A leaf that, having withered on the tree, has fallen to the ground, is a separated, a disunited thing. It is disunited from its parent tree, it is separated from its sister leaves. Such is death. It is a separation, a disuniting; it is the separation, first of all, of the soul and body. As the union of soul and body constitutes natural life, the separation of soul and body constitutes natural death. This separation every man living must undergo: fatal to man is the neglect of this great truth. Neglect it not, my brethren: when you see a leaf separated from its parent tree, let it remind you of the separation that must one day take place between the body and the soul; let it remind you that you shall not always, as you now do, see through the medium of the eye, and hear through the medium of the ear, and think through the medium of the brain. There is a spiritual world: to that world you belong; in that world as pure spirits you shall exist; on the verge of that spiritual world you are at this moment standing; upon it you are soon to enter; in that world you shall continue to see, but not through the medium of the eye; you shall continue to hear, but not through the medium of the ear; you shall continue to think, but not through the medium of the brain; then all that is in this world as to you—the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, shall come to an end. Now, if it should be the case that your happiness is now consisting in the seeing of the eye, or the hearing of the ear, or the gratification of the senses—

in the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and in the pride of life; if your happiness consists in, and is dependent on what is material, what is to become of you in that world that is spiritual? If your supreme happiness consist in aught that is earthly, in what shall it consist, when the world in which you are to dwell, and you yourselves shall no longer be of the "earth earthy," and when from all that is earthly, its possessions and its enjoyments, you shall be torn away for ever? If your happiness is connected with time, and the things of time, in what will you find happiness when time and the things of time shall be no more? Think of this, ye who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; think of this, ye who are seeking and finding your chief enjoyment in the pursuits and the pleasures of this passing and this perishing world. Hear it, men and brethren! take it from my lips as the word of God, that a happiness springing from, and ending with time, is no happiness—it has the show, but not the substance; it is a happiness that might content us if we were mortal only, but is no portion for an immortal soul. True happiness is an abiding happiness; the true happiness of an everlasting being is a happiness that, like himself, is everlasting. But what is this true and everlasting happiness? in what does it consist? In "doing the will of God." A life spent in doing the will of God, is a life of happiness; a life spent in contravening the will of God, is and must be a life of essential misery. Into such a life, a life of simply doing the will of God, now, my brethren, now that you are, and while you are in the body, enter; for into this life there is no entrance in the world to come. Of good or evil in the world to come there is no first choice; such a choice must be made here; and the choice that is made here, is the choice that is ratified hereafter. You are now either doing the will of God, or you are doing your own; if you are doing your own, you are sowing to the flesh, and shall of the flesh reap a harvest of corruption; if you are doing the will of God, you are sowing to the Spirit, and of the Spirit and in the Spirit you shall reap

a harvest of life eternal. But not only does death separate the soul and the body, it separates and disunites us from our relations and our friends. Very mysterious and deep, as you know well, is the affection we cherish for our relations and kinsmen according to the flesh. Do we hear, for example, of the sickness of a parent or a child, of a sister or a brother—with what eagerness and trepidation do we hasten to their bedside; with what interest do we gaze on their wan and wasted countenances; how anxiously do we watch the progress of the disease; with what pure delight do we witness the first dawning of recovery! On the other hand, when we often look but look in vain, when it is but too plain that they are dying, how does our heart sicken and die! And when at length death has completed his prey; when the eye is broken from whose look of love our heart drew its sweetest solace; when the spirit of the beloved object has fled, and all that remains to us is the cold, silent, and inanimate clay, how dreadful is the blow! We are overwhelmed with a sorrow we can scarcely bear, and the bitterness of which words are wanting to express. In our journey through life, many are the clouds which darken our path, and many are the events, the tendency of which is to bruise our spirit and to break our heart; but there is no event so solemn and so sad as that which converts our homes into a house of mourning, and stretches one of our nearest and dearest relations on the bed of death. Yet, all painful as this event is, it is one which we may expect to meet, and to meet which we should at all times be prepared. Among the mourners, of whom the earth is full, how many are at this moment uttering the language of the orphan children of Jerusalem—language "every letter of which seems written with a tear, and every word of which seems the sound of a broken heart:—" "We are orphans and fatherless, and our mothers are as widows." How many fond parents, during the past year, have seen their bright and beautiful laid in the dust, and are now left to weep over not only the flower of their flock, but the last of their race! How many husbands have stood by the bed on which

the mother of their children lay dying ! How many wives lately blessed with the husbands of their hearts, are now lonely and sorrowful widows ! See that band of mourners ; how powerful is the claim they have on your sympathy and your tears ! yet, while you "weep with them that weep," weep not for them only, but weep for yourselves. Sad, it is true, is their condition ; but in that condition see, my brethren, the emblems of your own. What they are now, that all of you will be at some time, and may be soon. Children, you may soon lose your parents ; fond parents, you may soon lose your children : your hearths now bright with the sunshine of their happy faces may soon be darkened ; your halls now vocal with their joyous voices may soon be silent. Husbands, you may soon lose "the delight of your eyes ;" and you happy wives, ye may be soon lonely widows. Such being the case, what influence ought the knowledge of this to have upon your conscience and your conduct ? surely, if permitted to exercise its legitimate influence, it will excite us to an immediate and faithful discharge of the duties we owe one to another, as parents or children, as husbands or wives. Whatever, then, in this matter, thy hand findeth to do, that do with all thy might and all thy diligence, for there is no knowledge, work, or device in the grave, whither thou art fast going. If, then, you who are children, shall be stirred up to honour, from this day henceforth, your parents more highly than ever you have yet done ; and if you who are parents shall be stirred up to perform those sacred and solemn duties you owe to your children, more faithfully in all time coming, than at any time past ; if the husband will be stirred up to a more faithful discharge of the duties of a husband, and the wife to a more faithful discharge of the duties of a wife ; so that when the sad and solemn hour of separation, which is surely coming to all, has come, amid its blackness and its bitterness, there shall be no root of regret and remorse in the remembrance of the past, and in reviewing the history of that relationship which by the hand of death has now been severed for ever ; if, we say,

you shall be stirred up to such a discharge of the duties you owe one to another, by means of the reflections to which this withered leaf may give rise, we shall have no cause of regret that we have directed your attention to this topic on this day.

It is not enough, however, that we direct your attention to the death of others, let us direct it to your own. By this withered leaf, you are instructed not only in the *nature*, but in the *certainly* of death.

Nothing is more certain than the fading of the leaf: equally certain is death. When we speak of the certainty of death, we speak, it is evident, not of its certainty as to time, or manner : than these nothing is more uncertain. The seasons have their time of coming and going, and we know when they will come and go ; the passage-birds have their appointed time, and we know when they will come and when they will depart ; the leaf has its time to flourish and its time to fade, and we know when it will flourish and when it will fade. It is otherwise with death : "Man knoweth not its time." I am old, said Jacob, yet I know not the day of my death : equally uncertain is death as to the manner of its coming. Amid all this uncertainty, however, one thing is certain—death itself. What is our life, indeed, but a constant dying—a death in life. The moment we begin to live, that moment we begin to die. I am dying while I now speak, and you are dying while you hear : every breath we take to lengthen life, shortens it ; and the more we live, the less we have to live : thus do we fade as a leaf. These you may think are stale and common-place remarks. We confess they are : frequently have they been made, and frequently have they been heard ; yet, frequently though such remarks respecting death and its certainty have been made, how few of you have even yet given it that consideration which its paramount importance demands ! Though day unto day utters speech ; though night unto night teaches man knowledge ; though in every new-made grave that meets our eye ; though in every newspaper that we read ; though in every funeral procession we are sum-

moned to attend, or that we see dragging its slow and sable length along our streets; though in every funeral bell that tolls the departure of another and another to the tomb; though all nature enters, as it were for our sakes, once every year into a state of death; though at this moment every sound that meets the ear, and every sight that meets the eye, is eloquent of death; though in all these we have solemn utterance and stern assurances of our approaching dissolution; yet how few of us realize this approach, so as to consider and to provide against its issues! Every species of arithmetic we will learn, but that of counting our days; every species of economy we will study, but that of setting our house in order, seeing we must die and not live. So certain is death, it might be thought that the first and great concern of all must be to provide against its approach and its issues; yet there is nothing of which we are more forgetful; yea, this very certainty of death, instead of fixing it in our thoughts, seems to make us but the more eager to escape from its consideration, as if our *not* thinking of its approach would alter its nature, or delay its coming. My brethren, are we in our senses? Will our blindness to danger diminish or prevent danger? Will we not die, because we never think of dying? Surely we cannot think this; you cannot but know that death is advancing, and that every effort you make to exclude it from your thoughts, does in effect but bring it the nearer! To know our danger, believe it, my brethren, is the first step of safety; to prepare for its approach, to provide for its issues, when inevitable, is the highest act of wisdom. The prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; it is the simple only that pass on, and are punished. Let the forewarnings of nature, then, be your forearmings; let not this season pass by unimproved; listen to the voice of nature. The voice of nature is the voice of God! God speaks to us from the dust as well as from the pulpit; and if hitherto you have lived as men who were *not* to die, live henceforth as men who *are*—to die—in the full foreknowledge of the fact, live

under its full influence: and ~~that~~ at the knowledge of death's certainty and death's solemnity may issue in life's sanctity, so may you seek and find, and so help you God.

Again, while this "withered leaf" instructs us in the *certainty*, it instructs us also in the *universality* of death.

We must, said the woman of Tekoah, *all* die, and be as water spilt on the ground. That we must all die requires no reasoning to prove; sufficient is it for us to appeal to experience. Since the birth of time, how many human beings have been born into time? Time still continues, but where are those who, during its past ages, have, with their names and their actions, filled its records? The stream of time still continues to wind, but where are those who have dwelt upon its banks? We have mighty forests, and crowded cities, but where are the hands that planted the one, or that built the other? We have books written many centuries ago, but where are those by whom they were written, and those whose actions or whose lives they record? Like an aged mother, the earth still remains, but where are her children? our fathers, where are they—and the prophets, do they live for ever? We have all occupied a portion of the past, but where are those who occupied it along with us? Where are the busy hands, and where the burning hearts; where are the gleaming eyes; where are the melting voices; where are the "old familiar faces?" Ah! the busy hands are motionless; the burning hearts are cold; the gleaming eyes are dim; the melting voices are silent; and the "old familiar faces are gone." Lover, acquaintance, and friend, have been removed into darkness. A thousand times has that dark and dream-like past been peopled with the living—living forms and living voices; and a thousand times has it been emptied again. A thousand times has the earth brought forth children, and a thousand times has she been bereaved; the grave has received them, and the grave will receive us—the grave that receives all—the grave that is never satisfied, and that never says, It is enough: thus,

Like leaves of trees the race of man is found,  
Now green in youth, now withering on the  
ground.

Another race the following age supplies;  
They fall successive, and successive rise:  
So generations in their course decay;  
So flourish these when those have passed away.

In conclusion, as the text instructs us in the *nature, certainty, and universality* of death, it instructs us also in its *cause*.

Were we to enter into a country almost deserted of its inhabitants; were we to witness on every hand villages and towns laid in ruins—fields, that had been ripe even unto harvest, trampled down and soaked with blood—wells choked up, and rivers polluted with the bodies of the slain—the erections of human ingenuity dismantled and overthrown—we would naturally ask, How has all this come to pass; how has this beautiful country become the scene of such terrible calamities? When we witness the earth, in like manner, with its three kingdoms, the vegetable, the animal, and the rational, full of corruption, decay, and death, and contrast it as originally full of health, and beauty, and life; standing as we do in a world intended to be a region of life—amid the chambers of the dying, and the sepulchres of the dead; it is natural to inquire, How has this come to pass; how has pain entered into the region of pleasure; sorrow into the region of joy; decay, corruption, and death, into the regions of beauty and life? Why is it that we, who were created in the image of our Maker, do all “fade as a leaf?” Why is it that we are born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward? Why is our sure and sad inheritance suffering, and sorrow, and death? The answer to these questions, the solution of these difficulties, is contained in the text; “Our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”

These are the consequences of which sin is the cause; these are the wrecks of a beautiful and blessed world, of which sin is the author. In what light, then, are we to regard sin? Has it corrupted all that was pure; has it defaced all that was beautiful in this lower world; has it filled all things with the seeds of decay and death; has it brought us under the

entire and everlasting forfeiture of God's favour; has it exposed us to his wrath and his curse, not only through all this life but through all the life that is to come; has it dug a dishonoured grave for our bodies; has it kindled an intolerable and an everlasting fire for our souls; has it wrought us all this wreck; has it proved to us the source of so many and so mighty woes; and shall we love it; shall we live in its love; shall we live willingly under its power; shall we not rather hate it, weep over it, forsake it? Has God provided a salvation for us; has he proclaimed and proffered it to us—a salvation from its guilt, its pollution, its power, its curse, its very being? How should we regard the offer of this salvation; an offer made to the most abandoned and the most depraved, the most worthless and the most wicked of mankind—made to them irrespective of all merit, and all condition of any personal having, and of any personal doing—an offer of Christ's salvation for Christ's sake. How should we treat? Should we not, the moment it is offered, that moment accept it, and that with all the gratitude and the joy a boon of such a kind, provided for and proffered to persons of our character, and in our condition, is so well fitted to produce? Is it to be conceived that it should be treated otherwise? Is it to be conceived, not that it should be rejected, but that it should not be received, with this gratitude and this joy? See you criminal on the scaffold; the preparations of death proceed. A messenger, proclaiming his errand lest he should come too late, forces a way through the crowd. A pardon! a pardon! resounds from every voice. When that sound reaches the ear of the criminal, how does it affect his heart? When a sealed pardon from royalty is unfolded, is put into his hands, how does he regard it, how does he treat it—with apathy, with neglect? See how he clasps his hands; see the hues of life returning to his cheek; see the wild but joyful light that sparkles in his eyes; see how his heart heaves; see that look of wild and delighted wonderment, as if he feared that the sights meeting his eyes, and the sounds meeting his ear, were the

sights and sounds of a delusive dream! Thus eagerly, thus gratefully, is the pardon received which restores the criminal to a suffering, sorrowful, and short existence in this world. With how much greater eagerness and gratitude ought that pardon to be accepted, which restores us to life eternal! Yet, to how many has this pardon been offered in vain! By how many is the salvation of the gospel—a salvation provided by the love of God, purchased by the blood of Christ, and applied by the love of the Spirit—a salvation which redeems us from the pains, the pollutions, and the punishments of hell, which exalts us to the dignities and the glories of heaven; by how many is this salvation neglected and despised; hitherto has it been neglected; hitherto has it been refused by you. Yet it may be accepted; for yet it is offered. You are guilty, and you may be willing to remain guilty; you are depraved, and you are willing to remain depraved; you are lost, and lost you are willing to remain. Yet, however, God is not willing; yet he has not ratified your choice; yet

the most guilty may be pardoned; the most depraved may be renewed; the most lost may be saved. This salvation are you willing now to accept—this salvation as a *whole*, and for Christ's sake? You now must either accept it, or reject it; *not* to accept it, know this, is to reject it. The consequences of this rejection are you willing or prepared to abide? It is a common saying, that "*it will be all one a hundred years hence.*" Ay, ay, it will be *all one* as to the honours and the distinctions of time; it will be *all one* as to its glimmer and glory; *all one* whether you have been rich, or whether you have been poor; *all one* whether you have been a wandering beggar, or a crowned king; but when a thousand years have come and gone, will it be *all one* whether that thousand years has been spent amid the sanctities and the glories of heaven, or amid the pollutions and the pains of hell? Oh, no, that will not be *all one*. As it will not be *all one* then, neither is it *all one now*; for, according to your "*sowing*" here, will be, and must be, your "*reaping*" hereafter.

THE END.









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